



PM chairs second CCS review meet on Middle East conflict

Calls for safeguarding citizens from crisis' impact | Directs depts to ameliorate people's problems



KNO News Desk

New Delhi, Apr 01: Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a special meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) to review measures taken by various Ministries and Departments and also discussed further initiatives to be taken in the context of the ongoing Middle East conflict at his residence in New Delhi on Wednesday. This was the second special CCS meeting on this issue.

According to a statement,

issued to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Cabinet Secretary briefed about the action taken to ensure supply of petroleum products, particularly LNG/LPG, and sufficient power availability.

He said that sources are being diversified for procurement of LPG with new inflows from different countries. Similarly, Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) is being sourced from different countries.

He further briefed that LPG prices for domestic

consumers have remained the same and Anti-diversion enforcement to curb hoarding and black marketing of LPG is being conducted regularly.

The statement reads that initiatives have also been taken to expand Piped Natural Gas connections. "Measures like exempting the gas-based power plants with a capacity of 7-8 GW from gas pooling mechanism and increasing of rake for positioning more coal at thermal power stations etc. have also been taken | More on P6

Border residents PM Modi's first priority: LG Sinha

'Under Prime Minister's leadership, distance from Delhi has shrunk'

Yogesh

Jammu, Apr 01: Asserting that border residents are the first priority for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday said that residents of frontier villages need to be honoured by ensuring a dignified and quality life for all.

Speaking at a public event, organised under the Phase-II of Vibrant Villages Programme, at the vibrant border village of Makwal here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "More than decade ago, border villages were routinely neglected. That time is over. Under the leadership of PM Modi, whether it is Jammu



Kashmir or the border villages of the North-East, the distance from Delhi has shrunk in a real sense."

He said, "Border villages are India's first line of defence,

and the residents are the first face of India that any outsider sees. Border residents are not only first in courage, sacrifice, and patience but you also stand first in the priorities of

our Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji."

The Lieutenant Governor observed that the residents of border village are serving the nation every | More on P6

LG calls for dismantling drug trafficking networks in J&K

Chairs high-level meeting with DCs, SSPs, top officials at Lok Bhavan



KNO Desk

Jammu, Apr 01: Asking the law enforcing agencies to dismantle trafficking networks in Jammu and Kashmir, Lieutenant Governor

Manoj Sinha on Wednesday said that action against drug abuse must be the top priority. Chairing a high-level meeting with Deputy Commissioners, SSPs and senior officials of

the civil and police administration at Lok Bhavan here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) directed for adopting a 'Zero Tolerance' | More on P6

LG welcomes collaboration between SKUAST-J, IFPRI

Says global expertise to boost farmer incomes, employment

KNO Desk

Jammu, Apr 01: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday welcomed the proposed collaboration between SKUAST-Jammu and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) for agricultural transformation in J&K.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), LG Sinha today chaired a high-level meeting to discuss a strategic collaboration between the two institutions for strengthening evidence-based policy-making and sustainable agricultural transformation in the Union Territory.

The Lieutenant Governor welcomed the proposed collaboration with IFPRI, noting that its global expertise would significantly strengthen institutional capacities in the region.

The meeting was attended by Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; | More on P6

CM assures: Regularisation of daily wagers from this year

PDP walks out of House; Tarigami withdraws bill after govt assurances

Waris Fayaz

Jammu, Apr 01: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday reiterated his commitment that regularisation of daily-wagers will begin in this year, saying that the process will commence in a phased manner.

Speaking in the Assembly, CM Omar, per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said it is the first day of the financial year and he has committed that within this financial year the process of regularisation will begin in a phased manner.

He added that the government is awaiting the report of the committee examining the issue and assured that its recommendations will be implemented.



Meanwhile, acknowledging the assurance, CPI(M) MLA M Y Tarigami said repeated commitments from the government are necessary to remove uncertainty among workers. He welcomed the Chief Minister's stance and withdrew his bill, stating he would | More on P6

'Govt tightens regulation to promote responsible tourism'

KT News Desk

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said the Tourism Department is taking steps to strengthen training, registration and regulatory mechanisms for tourism stakeholders to ensure safety, quality and responsible tourism practices across Jammu and Kashmir. The Chief Minister was replying to a question raised by MLA Zadibal Tanvir Sadiq during the Question Hour of the ongoing Budget Session of the J&K Legislative Assembly.

He informed the House that licensing and | More on P6

In a first, NC allows Private Member's bill on lease renewal in J&K Assembly

Proposed legislation seeks restoration of J&K Land Grants Act, 1960 | Opp says move aimed to benefit super-rich in Kashmir

KNO Special Correspondent

Jammu, Apr 01: For the first time after assuming power in Jammu & Kashmir in 2024, the ruling National Conference allowed the introduction of a Private Member's Bill seeking the renewal of lease rights for existing occupants whose leases have expired.

As per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Bill aims to restore the Jammu and Kashmir Land Grants Act, 1960, and its rules to their original form, prior to the Jammu and Kashmir Land



Grant Rules, 2022.

The Bill, moved by NC's Tanvir Sadiq, is intended to undo the 2022 Rules, which stipulate that all leases—especially commercial ones—will not be renewed | More on P6

'Betrayal of public mandate': LoP Sharma

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma on Wednesday accused the National Conference of misusing the public mandate, alleging that the government's move to allow a private member's bill seeking amendments to the Land Grants Act is aimed at protecting elite interests rather than safeguarding public assets | More on P6

Shreya Singhal assumes charge as Dir Info J&K

Calls for transparent, people-centric dissemination of information



KT News Desk

Jammu, Apr 01: Shreya Singhal, IAS, on Wednesday assumed the charge of Director Information Jammu & Kashmir.

After assuming office, the Director held an introductory meet with the | More on P6

Return of KPs hinges on security conditions: Omar

Says protection of religious sites remains govt priority

Waris Fayaz

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley depends on restoration of a secure environment, asserting that the government continues to priori-

tise protection of their religious sites. Speaking in the Legislative Assembly during a discussion on a private member's bill, the Chief Minister, per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said the displacement of Kashmiri Pandits is a reality the | More on P6

Tech-driven policing marks significant milestone

J&K secures top position on NCRB's CCTNS Pragati Dashboard

KNO Desk

Srinagar, Apr 01: Marking a significant milestone in technology-driven policing and improved citizen services in the Union Territory, Jammu and Kashmir has secured a top position on the CCTNS Pragati Dashboard of the National Crime Records Bureau.

According to official data accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) as of March 1, 2026, J&K ranked first among Union Territories (excluding Delhi), reflecting the sustained and coordinated

efforts of the CCTNS team of the Crime Branch, J&K Police. In the overall national ranking of States and UTs, Delhi secured the top position.

Pertinently, the rankings are part of the monthly performance assessment conducted under the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) by the NCRB under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. The evaluation is based on key parameters including data quality, timeliness, and accuracy across national policing platforms integrated with | More on P6

Weather to remain erratic till April 10: MeT

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Apr 01: The India Meteorological Department on Wednesday said erratic weather conditions are likely to continue across Jammu and Kashmir till April 10, with spells of rain, snow, thunderstorms and gusty winds expected over the next several days.

An official of the Meteorological Centre Srinagar told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that light rain or snow may occur at a few places on April 1 and 2, while widespread precipitation is expected between April 3 and 4, accompanied by thunderstorms,

hailstorms and gusty winds. Moderate to heavy rain or snow is also expected at isolated higher reaches.

Fresh spells of precipitation are likely between April 7 and 9, while April 5 and 6 may remain partly cloudy with isolated light rain.

The MeT department has warned of gusty winds (40-50 kmph), landslides, shooting stones and waterlogging at vulnerable locations, advising farmers to suspend operations on April 3 and 4.

Meanwhile, traffic authorities issued advisories for multiple key routes across the Union Territory. An official said, | More on P6

J&K ASSEMBLY

Resolution on transfer of NHPC projects to J&K Govt on agenda today

KNO Special Correspondent

Jammu, Apr 01: A crucial resolution seeking the transfer of National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC)-owned projects in Jammu & Kashmir to the Union Territory Government is set to be taken up in the J&K Assembly on Thursday.

The resolution, submitted by NC MLA Sajad Shaheen, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), has been listed in the business of the House for April 2—one of the two days fixed for Private Member Resolutions. It is among seven resolutions selected through



balloting. The text of the resolution reads: "This House resolves to recommend that the

Government of India may be urged to consider, in consultation with the Union Territory Government | More on P6

Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra 2026: Div Com Kashmir reviews preparations

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, APRIL 01: To ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY) 2026, the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Wednesday chaired a comprehensive review meeting with senior officers to assess preparedness and finalize arrangements for the pilgrimage to the Holy Cave.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Deputy Commissioners of Anantnag, Budgam, Ganderbal, Bandipora, and Srinagar along with the Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation and senior officials from multiple departments, including ULB, FCS&CA, RTC, RTO, Rural Sanitation, SASB, KPDC, R&B, PHE, I&F, AYUSH, BEACON, Animal Husbandry, Labour, Health, Information, Fire & Emergency Services, IMD, Tourism, SDA, PDA, Forests, Wildlife, SDRF, district SSPs, ITBP, NHIDCL, and NHA. Representatives from service providers including G-Max, Jio, Airtel, and BSNL also participated.

During the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner reviewed departmental proposals under Revenue and Capital Expenditure (Capex) heads. He also assessed the status of works to be executed by BEACON, including snow clearance, repairs, and track widening along the Pahalgam route.

Emphasizing timely infrastructure readiness, he directed the Roads & Buildings (R&B) Department to expedite macadamization of roads around Yatra base camps, development of parking facilities and pony stands, and ensure restoration of helipads.

With regard to tentages along the Pahalgam and Baltal axes, the Divisional Commissioner stressed the importance of quality, safety, and aesthetics. He instructed that tents must be installed only in secure, non-vulnerable areas.

To strengthen disaster preparedness, he directed the Deputy Commissioner Anantnag to coordinate resource pooling and conduct detailed assessments of flood-prone zones, ensuring safe placement of



camp and regulated movement of pilgrims. The Divisional Commissioner also reviewed the capacity and amenities at base camps, directing departments to maintain adequate fire safety measures, including designated fire gaps between tents and deployment of fire tenders and personnel. He underscored the need for robust sanitation arrangements at camps and along the Yatra routes, tasking the concerned departments with ensuring cleanliness throughout the pilgrimage.

On registration, he instructed that all processes for yatra and service providers be completed well in advance of the Yatra's commencement.

Further, he reviewed health-care facilities along both routes and called for increased deployment of ambulances. Directions were also issued regarding accommodation for security personnel, provision of RTC buses for pilgrim transportation, installation of public address systems and signage, dissemination of timely weather updates, and strengthening of disaster management mechanisms.

Telecom service providers were instructed to ensure seamless network coverage across all routes and camps, enabling effective communication and facilitating RFID-based tracking systems.

Intensify sanitation drives, maintain sustained cleanliness standards: CEO SSCL

Conducts on-ground inspection in Lal Chowk

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, APRIL 1: In a proactive move to strengthen civic service delivery and ensure responsive governance, Faz Lul Haseeb, Chief Executive Officer, Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL), conducted a comprehensive on-ground inspection at Lal Chowk.

During the visit, the CEO, as per an official statement, engaged directly with traders, shopkeepers, and other stakeholders to gather first-hand feedback on pressing civic issues, including sanitation, drainage, and public utility services. The interaction provided a platform for stakeholders to voice their concerns, which were attentively heard and acknowledged on the spot.

Traders and business owners welcomed the initiative, appreciating the administration's hands-on approach and commitment to resolving long-standing issues through

direct field engagement.

Taking immediate cognizance of the grievances raised, the CEO issued on-the-spot directions to the concerned departments for swift and effective redressal. The Drainage Wing was instructed to urgently address bottlenecks and ensure the proper functioning and maintenance of the drainage network in and around Lal Chowk.

The Chief Sanitation Officer of Srinagar Municipal Corporation was directed to further intensify sanitation drives and maintain sustained cleanliness standards in the area, keeping in view its significance as a high-footfall commercial and public space.

Additionally, officials of SSCL were directed to prioritize the resolution of electrical and allied infrastructure issues to ensure seamless public utility services for traders, commuters, and visitors alike.

STATE INVESTIGATION AGENCY KASHMIR SRINGAR

Annexure "A"
Form No.
Sessions Judge

IN THE COURT OF Mr. Manjeet Rai Additional Sessions Judge TADA/POTA Special Judge Designated under NIA Act, Srinagar.

Cr. Misc. Applications/71/2026
UT of JK through SIA Kashmir FIR. No. 14/2023 Vs
Jazim Farooq Wani and Others

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS complaint has been made before me that Zaffar Hussain Bhat @ Khurshid Kashmiri S/o Sonallah Bhat Rio Levar, Sailer, Srigufwara, Anantnag has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offences punishable under section 302 r/w 120B, 34 IPC, 7/25, 27 A.Aa, 13, 16, 17, 18, 188, 19, 20, 23, 38, 39 UA(P) Act and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Zaffar Hussain Bhat Khurshid Kashmiri S/o Sonallah Bhat cannot be found, and whereas It has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Zaffar Hussain Bhat @ Khurshid Kashmiri S/o Sonallah Bhat is evading arrest and has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation under section 82 CrPC is hereby made that the said Zaffar Hussain Bhat @ Khurshid Kashmiri S/o Sonallah Bhat required to appear before this Court within thirty days from the date of publication of the proclamation.

Dated, this day of 24-03-2026

DIPK-40/26
DATED: 01-04-2026

Additional Sessions Judge TADA/POTA
Special Judge Designated under NIA Act, Srinagar

Sub Transmission Division Bijbehara

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
e-NITNO: STB/60 of 2025-26; Dated: 30/03/2026

For and on behalf of the Lt Governor, Jammu and Kashmir State, e-Tenders (In Two Cover System) are hereby invited from "A" Class Electrical Contractors issued by the Electrical Inspectorate of Govt of Central Inspectorial organization of Govt. of India/ other state Govt. In case bid submitted joint venture firm, any of partner should possess "A" class electrical license for "Shifting of 33 KV Pahalgam line along the road from Receiving Station Batkoot to Lamkhorou by way of Construction of new 33 KV Line on 11 Mtr. Long ST Poles." as per terms, conditions, technical specifications and schedules forming part of this tender document. Intending bidders are requested to submit their offer along with terms, conditions, technical specifications and annexure forming part of this tender document. The details are as under:

#	Name of Work	Adv. Cost. (IN Rs.)	Cost of e-Bid/ tender document (Rs)	EMD (Rs)
1.	Shifting of 33 KV Pahalgam line along the road from Receiving Station Batkoot to Lamkhorou by way of Construction of new 33 KV Line on 11 Mtr. Long ST Poles	5189266.00	2000	103785
2	Publishing Date & Time	31.03.2026 (1700 Hrs)		
3	Document Download / Sale Start Date & Time	31.03.2026 (1700 Hrs)		
4	Seek Clarification Start Date & Time	31.03.2026 (1700 Hrs)		
5	Bid Submission Start Date & Time	31.03.2026 (1700 Hrs)		
6	Seek Clarification End Date & Time	18.04.2026 (1700 Hrs)		
7	Bid Submission End Date & Time	20.04.2026 (1500 Hrs)		
8	Bid opening date & Time	21.04.2026 (1500 Hrs)		
9	Venue of opening Bids	STD Bijbehara		
10	Availability of Funds	Demanded under SANJY 2026		

The tender document is available at website <http://jktenders.gov.in>. Interested bidders may view, download the e-Bid document, seek clarification if required and submit their e-Bid online up to the date and time mentioned in the table below.

2. There is no need of furnishing of hard copies of bids after submission of e-tenders. The same should be obtained only from the bidder who is declared as L1 after opening of financial bid as per the instructions of Finance Department issued vide O.M No. A/24(2017)-651; Dated: 07-06-2018

3. All the e-Bids must be accompanied by the scanned copy of cost of tender document. The cost of tender document should be paid through e- challan/ treasury challan /receipt only.

4. All the e-Bids must be accompanied by the scanned copy of EMD in the form of CDR/FDR/TD, pledged to the Executive Engineer Sub transmission Division Bijbehara. No Interest would be payable on Earnest Money deposited with the Department. However the bidder who is declared L1 after opening of financial bid has to submit the original EMD to the office of the Executive Engineer Sub transmission Division Bijbehara through speed post, Courier or by hand.

5. The e-Bids will be electronically opened in the presence of bidder's representatives, who choose to attend at the venue, date and time mentioned in the above table or any subsequent day to the convenience of the Tender Opening Committee. An authority letter of bidder's/OEM representative will be required to be produced.

6. The Department reserves the right to cancel any or all the e-Bids/ the e-Bid process without assigning any reason thereof. The decision of department will be final and binding.

7. In the event of date specified for e-Bids opening being declared a holiday for department's office then the due date for opening of e-Bids shall be the following working day at the appointed time and place.

8. All the required documents excluding Price Schedule/BOQ should be uploaded by the e-Bidder electronically in the PDF format, whereas Price Schedule/BOQ should be uploaded electronically in the same BOQ sheet provided with the SBD.

9. To participate in e-bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' class III(b) as per Information Technology Act-2000, to participate in online bidding.

10. The tender document is available on website. Interested bidders may view, download the e-Bid document, seek clarification and submit their e-Bid online up to the date and time mentioned in the table above. The Quoted rates shall be Firm, inclusive of all taxes and duties, WCT, freight, transportation up to working sites. The rates shall include costs, if any attracted towards mandatory inspections / testing by the designated agencies and the department will not be required to pay / reimburse anything over and above the price quoted. All the bids must be supported by the Instrument of EMD of the exact amount as mentioned in the above table and shall have been issued post tender publication date. Moreover, any deviation in the EMD amount is liable for rejection.

11. In case the bid of the bidder is unbalanced, the bidder has to submit additional performance security deposit in the shape of CDR/FDR as per the breakup given below:

S.No	Percentage of unbalanced bid viz Quoted percentage of NIT	Additional performance security
01	Upto and including 10% below	Nil
02	>10% up to and including 25% below	05% of the bid cost
03	>25%	10% of the bid cost.

12. The work is to be completed within 45 days from the date of issue of LOA as the work is of vital importance being related to SANJY 2026.

Sd/= Executive Engineer
Sub Transmission Division
Bijbehara

NO:STB/Ts/etender/5978-81
Dated: 30/03/2026

DIPK-NB-3/26
DATED: 01-04-2026

Govt. Medical College Handwara

Sub: Advertisement for Engagement of Junior Residents on Academic Arrangement Basis Under S.O. 364 of 2020 dated 27-11-2020 in various Departments of Government Medical College Handwara.

Advertisement Notice No. 06 -JR of 2026

Dated: 01-04-2026

Applications, on the prescribed format are invited from eligible candidates, for the posts of Junior Residents in various Departments of Govt. Medical College Handwara purely on Academic Arrangement Basis under S.O 364 dated 27-11-2020 initially for a period of (06) six months extendable up to a maximum of 01 year on the basis of their work conduct/performance as reported by the Concerned Head of the Department. Application forms will be available on the official website of Govt Medical College Handwara @ <https://gmchandwara.co.in>.

The application form duly filled along with all the requisite documents and Demand Draft of Rs. 500 (Rupees Five Hundred) only from JK BANK pledged to/in favour of Chief Accounts Officer, Govt. Medical College Handwara payable at Handwara should be submitted in the office of Registrar Academics, Govt. Medical College, Handwara.

Date of Interview/Written Test (whichever is applicable) for the said post shall be notified separately on the official website of Govt. Medical College Handwara.

The last date of submission of Completed applications forms along with all the prerequisite documents is 06-04-2026 till 4 pm. The application forms shall be accompanied with the self-attested Xerox copies of the following documents/testimonials.

1. MBBS Degree certificate from a NMC recognized Institution.
2. Marks Cards of all Professional Examinations.
3. Internship completion certificate.
4. Permanent Registration Certificate from State Medical Council/ NMC
5. Attempt certificate of all professional examinations.
6. Date of Birth Certificate.
7. Domicile Certificate.
8. Distinction / National Scholarship / Honours / Medals / Academic Merit certificates.
9. Two recent passport size photographs.
10. Others as deemed necessary by the competent authority.

Terms and Conditions:

1. The engages shall not be entitled to private practice or undertake simultaneous part time / full time job anywhere else. He / She shall work on Full time basis.
2. The selected candidates shall have to execute an agreement that he/she shall not leave the department before completion of his/her sanctioned tenure failing which the security deposit shall be forfeited and no experience certificate shall be issued.
3. The Competent Authority reserves the right of any amendment, cancellation and changes to this advertisement as a whole or in part without assigning any reason or giving notice.
4. Mere submitting of the documents/certificates shall not be considered as final, candidature of any candidate is provisional and is subject to cancellation if found ineligible by any means at any stage of recruitment process / selection.
5. Maximum age for eligibility to apply shall be 50 years as on cut-off date.
6. The Salary of the selected candidates will be released only after satisfactory reports from CID verification in their favor.
7. The first salary shall be kept as security deposit by the accounts department and shall be paid only on successful completion of the tenure engagement

Prof (Dr.) Khurshid Ahmad Wani
Principal
Govt. Medical College Handwara

No: GMC/Hand/2026/Acad/

Dated: 01-04-2026

DIPK-4/26
DATED: 01-04-2026

Election Commissioner vows 100% voter enrolment

● Reviews panchayat electoral roll revision



KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Apr 01: Jammu and Kashmir State Election Commissioner, Shantmanu on Wednesday convened a meeting with the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) and Panchayat Block Electoral Officers (PBEOs) to review the ongoing revision of the Panchayat Electoral Rolls, 2026.

The revision process was initiated on 27 March 2026 with the release of the draft electoral roll, inviting claims and objections for new enrolments, deletions or transfers of voters across the Union Territory.

The Election Commissioner emphasised house-to-house outreach by the field staff to ensure all eligible voters who turn 18 years by

the cut-off date of 1 April 2026 are enrolled in the Panchayat Electoral Roll.

The last date for filing claims and objections has been set as 29 April 2026.

Shantmanu instructed the officials to strictly adhere to the timeline for disposing of claims and objections and submit daily progress reports to the Commission. He asked the Block Development Officers to launch awareness campaigns at each Panchayat Halqa to widely publicise the roll revision process.

The Election Commission will also obtain continuous feedback from the district-appointed Roll Observers to monitor the process and achieve 100 percent enrolment of eligible voters in the Panchayat electoral rolls.

Amit Sharma highlights Census 2027 roadmap

● Clarifies SIR distinction, key timelines

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Apr 01: Chief Principal Census Officer and Director Census Operations, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Amit Sharma on Wednesday addressed a press meet here and shared comprehensive details regarding the upcoming Census 2027, which will be India's first Census to be conducted fully through digital mode.

Highlighting the scale of the exercise, Amit Sharma informed that Census 2027 will ensure complete confidentiality of individual data as per the provisions of the Census Act, 1948. The Census will be carried out in two phases across the Union Territory, with the first phase of House Listing Operations and Housing Census scheduled from



June 1 to June 30, 2026, preceded by a 15-day self-enumeration period from May 17 to May 31, 2026, he added. Besides, the population enumeration in non-snow bound areas will be undertaken in February 2027 while snow-bound areas will be covered earlier in September 2026 as per notified timelines.

He highlighted that the option to self-enumerate wherein people can submit their own information through Self Enumeration online portal is a first-time feature and unique initiative of Census 2027.

Emphasizing the digital aspect, data collection on household amenities and assets will be carried out through mobile applications equipped with in-built validation checks. A web-based Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) will enable real-time monitoring and efficient execution of

Legislators raise several public interest issues in LA

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Apr 01: The Zero Hour in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Wednesday witnessed wide-ranging deliberations, with the Members raising pressing public issues and seeking timely intervention from the government in redress of these concerns.

MLA Reyaz Ahmad Khan urged the government to take immediate steps to facilitate safe return of students from Jammu and Kashmir presently stranded in Iran. He emphasized the need for coordinated efforts to ensure their well-being and early evacuation.

MLA Shabir Ahmad Kullay called for constitution of a committee to examine the discrepancies between officially claimed sports infrastructure and the actual facilities available on the ground. He highlighted concerns over the mismatch between records and reality, stressing the importance of transparency and accountability.

MLA Balwant Singh Mankotia demanded prompt action on the findings of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), particularly regarding unspent and unaccounted funds in various government departments. He underscored the need for financial discipline and adherence to audit observations.

MLA Nizam-ud-din Bhat drew attention to the shortage of specialist medical staff at District Hospital Bandipora, specifically absence of a Surgeon Specialist following a recent retirement. He urged the concerned authorities to address the gap to ensure uninterrupted healthcare services to the public.

The House also witnessed detailed discussion on the issue of legislators' salaries, allowances, and related privileges.

MLA Dr. Narinder

Singh Raina advocated for a structured and periodic revision of legislators' salaries, aligned with the patterns followed for government employees.

MLA Javid Hassan Baig emphasized that salaries constitute a legitimate entitlement of legislators and called for their rational revision in line with parliamentary practices, while maintaining discretion in public discourse given the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of Members.

Supporting this view, MLA Ranbir Singh Pathania stressed the need for an institutionalized mechanism for revising legislators' emoluments. Referring to the principle articulated by former Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee, he noted that such matters should be addressed through an independent and credible framework, safeguarding the dignity and sovereignty of the House.

MLA Sajad Gani Lone described the issue as a test of the authority of the Legislature and called for a review of the factors delaying implementation of the House's recommendations.

MLA Nizam-ud-din Bhat further linked the matter to broader concerns of legislators' privileges and protocol, advocating for a comprehensive and merit-based resolution to settle the issue conclusively.

MLA Muzaffer Iqbal Khan observed that the proposed increase in salary was relatively modest, while a larger enhancement had been suggested in allowances to meet the growing expenditure associated with legislative responsibilities.

Reiterating his earlier concerns, MLA Shabir Ahmad Kullay highlighted the need to enhance the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) allocated to legislators. He noted that the current annual allocation of 4 crore per constituency is insufficient to meet the developmental expectations of the public.

Ruckus in Assembly

Tanvir Sadiq flags 'BJP-PDP nexus'

WARIS FAYAZ

Jammu, Apr 01: While defending his proposed legislation on land rights, National Conference Chief Spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq on Wednesday accused Peoples Democratic Party of having a tacit understanding with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Reacting to the disruption triggered during the House proceedings, Sadiq said the developments had shown that the BJP and PDP were "on the same page". He claimed that when his bill was admitted in the Assembly, there was no objection, but resistance surfaced later.

The NC MLA was referring to his private member's bill seeking restoration of the Jammu and Kashmir Land Grants Act, 1960 and reversal of the 2022 rules. The bill aims to protect the rights of existing leaseholders and restore the legal framework governing government land.

Defending the proposal, Sadiq said the legislation is intended to benefit those who have legally acquired land under government leases across regions including



Jammu, Srinagar, Gulmarg and Pahalgam. He said the bill would provide legal certainty to such occupants whose rights were affected after changes in 2022.

"This is about giving legal sanctity to those who have taken land through proper process," he said, adding that the measure is not meant for encroachments or illegal holdings.

NC spokesperson rejected allegations that the bill was aimed at benefiting influential persons. He said it would cover a wide range of stakeholders, including small shopkeepers, school operators and families who had obtained land through valid leases.

He also argued that restoring the earlier framework would prevent distress transfer of such properties and protect local interests, particularly in tourist and commercial areas.

Taking a swipe at PDP MLA Waheed Ur Rehman Para, Sadiq accused him of diverting the debate and misrepresenting the intent of the bill. He said raising unrelated issues during discussion on daily wagers reflected an attempt to politicise the matter.

He maintained that the proposed law would also help create a structured basis for future land distribution to the landless by ensuring legal clarity—(KNO)

J&K records 34% rainfall deficit in March



SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Apr 01: Jammu and Kashmir has recorded a 34 per cent deficit in seasonal rainfall between March 1 and April 1.

Data released by the India Meteorological Department states that the Union Territory received 101.4 mm of rainfall during the period against a normal of 154.6 mm.

Most districts in Kashmir division reported deficient rainfall, with Shopian recording the highest shortfall at 74 per cent, followed by Kulgam at 61 per cent and Doda at 52 per cent.

Anantnag and Budgam also witnessed significant deficits of 47 per cent and 45 per cent respectively, while Srinagar recorded a 24 per cent

shortfall.

In North Kashmir, Kupwara reported 21 per cent below normal rainfall, while Bandipora saw a 35 per cent deficit.

In contrast, a few areas recorded normal or above-normal precipitation. Ganderbal received seven per cent above normal rainfall, while Poonch and Samba recorded excess rainfall of 25 per cent and 35 per cent respectively.

Kargil in Ladakh registered an exceptionally high departure from normal at 782 per cent, though overall precipitation levels remained low in absolute terms.

Officials said the uneven distribution of rainfall across the region could have implications for agriculture and water availability if the trend persists—(KNO)

J&K covers 14.4 Lakh priority ration card holders

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Apr 01: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Wednesday said a total of 14,40,473 Priority Household (PHH) ration card holders are covered across the Union Territory.

Replying to a starred question in the Legislative Assembly, the government said all eligible beneficiaries have been enrolled in the ration card database, while updation and deletion of cards is a continuous process based on verification and eligibility norms.

It said that identification of beneficiaries is carried out as per Census 2011 data and targets assigned by the Government of India, adding that newly identified eligible families are included as and when revised targets are communicated.

Regarding LPG support, the government said it has announced three free LPG cylinders per year for AAY ration card holders to support economically vulnerable sections. Efforts are being made to enhance this support in future, subject to availability of

resources, it added.

The government further informed that a new scheme providing an additional 10 kilograms of free food grains per month to AAY households has been launched from April 2025 in Jammu division, aimed at households with four or more members.

Providing details, it said the scheme is currently operational across all districts of Jammu division, covering 37,412 AAY beneficiaries, with district-wise distribution including Jammu, Rajouri, Poonch, Doda and others.

On Fair Price Shops (FPS), the government said that 94 FPS are currently operational in Rajouri constituency. "The opening of new FPS in Jammu and Kashmir will be considered after full stabilisation of the Smart Public Distribution System (Smart PDS)," it said. "The proposals for new FPS will be formulated in line with S.O. 41 of 2023, taking into account population norms, geographical factors and existing coverage."

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

MLA Veeri pleads introduction of reservation bill

WARIS FAYAZ

Jammu, Apr 01: National Conference MLA Bashir Ahmad Veeri on Wednesday broke down in the Assembly while pleading with fellow legislators and the government to allow the introduction of his reservation-related bill.

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly, Bashir Ahmad Veeri pleaded with the Government to allow the introduction of his bill.

"I have only one son. He has left for London. He son told me, 'Papa, I will not return - there are no avenues for us,' an emotionally charged Veeri said.

Veeri said he told youngsters of his constituency he would fight against the reservation policy. "I told the youngsters, who were first-time voters and campaigned for me in the election that I will speak for them whether I am hanged or disqualified," he said.

"I want to appeal to the House, for Allah's sake allow the bill to be introduced for my children," he added.

He demanded increasing the share of open merit to 65 percent, implementing the Indra Sawhney judgment, and removing disparities in EWS, ALC, and RBA categories.

When the bill was put to vote, it failed to secure



support. Only four members voted in its favour, all from the opposition benches, while members of the ruling party opposed it. Responding on behalf of the government, Minister Sakina Itoo said reservation remains a sensitive issue and assured that due process has been followed. She said a cabinet sub-committee, constituted under the directions of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, completed its report within the stipulated timeframe after consultations with stakeholders. The report, she said, has been approved by the government and forwarded to the Lieutenant Governor for final decision.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

No need to ban imported frozen food; Govt vows action

WARIS FAYAZ

Jammu, Apr 01: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Wednesday said there is no need to impose a ban on the import of frozen and chilled food items, asserting that enforcement of existing laws will be strengthened to ensure food safety and curb violations.

Health minister Sakina Itoo said the government is focused on strict implementation of food safety regulations rather than imposing a blanket ban.

She informed the House that 3,700 inspections have been conducted, with 1,346

samples collected for testing. Of these, 1,292 reports have been processed, while 601 cases have been registered under relevant provisions of the law.

The minister said authorities have seized 22,026 units of food items and imposed fines amounting to Rs 30.8 lakh.

She said the government is working to curb illegal practices and ensure that people get safe and hygienic food, adding that strict action will be taken against violators.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

EDITORIAL

Higher Edu Dept must answer some uncomfortable questions

The revelation that two government degree colleges in Jammu and Kashmir have zero student enrolment, while dozens more function with fewer than fifty students, is an indictment of a system that continues to pour resources into institutions that students are increasingly rejecting. When Government Degree College Baghi Dilawar Khan and GDC Chattisinghpora have no takers, when institutions like the Government College of Education, M.A Road, enrol just fourteen students, the question is no longer about access but about

relevance. The government's response is telling. "Inadequate to sustain a viable academic environment", it admits, placing these colleges under the administrative oversight of neighbouring institutions. But administrative oversight does not address the core crisis: why are students voting with their feet? The centralised admission portal and the Fourth-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) are cited as corrective measures, yet the data speaks for itself—24 colleges with fewer than 100 students, 14 with fewer than 50, and a proliferation of institutions with enrolments

in the double digits. The Higher Education Department must answer some uncomfortable questions. First, what was the viability assessment when these colleges were established? Were demographic trends, student demand, and geographical accessibility genuinely studied, or was political expediency the primary driver? Second, why does the rationalisation of subject offerings to align with student demand remain reactive rather than proactive? A college cannot wait for years of empty classrooms to recognise that its curriculum does not match

the aspirations of the students it was meant to serve. Third, what is the plan for these moribund institutions? Continuing to fund and staff colleges with negligible enrolment is a drain on resources that could strengthen genuinely viable institutions. Consolidation—merging colleges, repurposing infrastructure, or even closure where no demand exists—must be considered, however politically unpalatable. The current arrangement of placing non-viable colleges under the charge of distant institutions is a temporary fix that addresses neither the students' needs nor

the public exchequer's efficiency. The government must conduct a comprehensive audit of all degree colleges, assessing not just enrolment numbers but the return on investment. Where colleges consistently fail to attract students, the infrastructure must be repurposed—perhaps as vocational training centres, skill development hubs, or community colleges offering courses aligned with local economic needs. The days of building colleges as trophies must end. Higher education is too precious a resource to be wasted on empty benches.

PMAY-G Advancing Housing For All In Rural India

Press Information Bureau

The journey of rural housing in India over the past decade is a story of transformation and dignity. What began as a vision to ensure that every rural family has a secure home has grown into a nationwide movement that has touched millions of lives. A permanent (pucca) house is not just a shelter - it is a foundation for stability, opportunity, and hope for the future.

Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin, being implemented since 1st April 2016, has steadily evolved into one of the largest social welfare initiatives in the country. It seeks to provide permanent houses with basic amenities to all houseless households and those living in temporary (kutcha) or dilapidated homes. By addressing the rural housing shortage and reducing the housing deficit, the scheme plays a vital role in advancing the mission of "Housing for All." The minimum size of the houses under PMAY-G is 25 sq. m., including a dedicated area for hygienic cooking. The scheme has been implemented in multiple phases to progressively achieve its goals.

By combining housing with access to sanitation, clean cooking energy, electricity, and drinking water, it has improved the quality of life in villages across India. Over the years, the scheme has embraced technology, transparency, and convergence with other national programmes, becoming a symbol of inclusive growth and rural empowerment.

A HOME THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING:

Taid's Journey to Safety and Stability
Taid, a widow from the Titabor area of Jorhat district in Assam, lived for years in a flood-prone area where her fragile home offered little protection. Life was uncertain, but in 2016-17, her dream of a permanent house became a reality through Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G). With support, she built a strong home that provided her family with safety and dignity. Today, her permanent house stands as a symbol of resilience, protects her family against floods, and offers stability for the future. Taid's journey reflects how PMAY-G is transforming rural lives, ensuring even the most vulnerable households step into a brighter tomorrow.

A Decade of Progress and Achievements

Over the past ten years, PMAY-G has steadily expanded its reach and delivered housing at scale. The scheme has demonstrated consistent performance, with year-wise completions indicating its capacity to maintain steady progress across various phases. PMAY-G has empowered beneficiaries through seamless convergence with the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (erstwhile MGNREGA), Swachh Bharat Mission - Gramin, Self-Help Groups, Jal Jeevan Mission, and PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana.

Allocated Target and Achievements

As of 26 March 2026, a target of 4.15 crore houses has been allocated under phases I and II. In total, 3.90 crore houses have been sanctioned, and 2.99 crore houses have been completed. To support this scale of implementation, a cumulative fund transfer of 4,03,886.12 crore

Financial Year	Houses Completed
2016-2017	2,115
2017-2018	38,15,966
2018-2019	44,92,951
2019-2020	21,31,192
2020-2021	33,99,570
2021-2022	42,39,725
2022-2023	57,74,696
2023-2024	20,83,730
Total	2,59,39,945
2024-2025	13,73,546
2025-2026	26,01,907
Total	2,99,15,398

Source: Ministry of Rural Development

has been made, ensuring timely resource for construction and beneficiary support across states.

Collectively, these milestones reflect the sustained momentum and wide-scale impact of PMAY-G, highlighting its effectiveness in moving toward universal housing in rural areas.

Implementation Framework and Reforms

PMAY-G has been designed as a beneficiary-led programme, where families take ownership of building their homes. Over the years, several reforms have been introduced to strengthen transparency, efficiency, and quality in implementation.

Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT): Financial assistance is released directly into the beneficiary's bank account. This ensures that funds reach households without delay or leakage, strengthening financial inclusion.

Geo-tagging of Houses: At every stage of construction, time and date-stamped photographs are uploaded. This digital record allows real-time monitoring of progress and ensures that houses are built as per guidelines.

Village-level Functionaries: Each sanctioned house is tagged to a local functionary who follows up with the beneficiary. This system provides hands-on support and ensures that construction is completed in a timely manner.

Block and District Inspections: Officers at the block level inspect around 10% of houses, while district officers inspect 2% at each stage of construction. These inspections add an additional layer of quality assurance and oversight.

Social Audits: Every Gram Panchayat conducts a formal social audit at least once a year. This involves community participation and review of all aspects of the scheme, reinforcing transparency and accountability.

National-level Monitoring: Officers and National-level monitors from the

Ministry of Rural Development visit houses during field inspections. They assess progress, verify beneficiary selection, and ensure that procedures are being followed correctly.

AwaasSoft MIS Platform: AwaasSoft is a bilingual, web-based platform that integrates all functions of PMAY-G. From beneficiary identification and sanction orders to fund release and construction monitoring, it provides a single source of information for all stakeholders.

These reforms have created a strong framework that combines technology, community participation, and

institutional oversight. This has enabled PMAY-G to deliver housing transparently and efficiently.

Impact on Rural Households

Rural households have experienced profound transformation - secure homes, better services, and empowerment. PMAY-G has driven this by strengthening social inclusion and access to essentials.

Improved Living Conditions: Families now live in permanent houses that are durable, safe, and weather-resistant. This shift from temporary to permanent housing has enhanced security and dignity for millions of households.

Access to Sanitation: Through convergence with various other schemes, PMAY-G beneficiaries get assistance of 12,000 from Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM(G)), MGNREGA (Now VB: G RAM G) or any other dedicated funding source for the construction of toilets. This has promoted hygiene, reduced health risks, and contributed to cleaner villages.

Employment Support: The scheme ensures 90-95 person-days of unskilled labour wages under MGNREGA (now VB: G RAM G). This not only supports construction but also provides livelihood opportunities for rural workers.

Clean Cooking Energy: Convergence with the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has enabled households to access LPG connections. This has reduced dependence on traditional fuels, improved health, and promoted cleaner energy use.

Electricity and Water Supply: Beneficiaries gain access to electricity connections and piped drinking water through linked government programmes. These amenities have improved daily living standards and reduced drudgery.

Renewable Energy Options: Solar lanterns and rooftop systems have been introduced to promote sustainable energy use. This supports environmental goals while providing reliable power in rural areas.

Building Skills for Quality Homes: The Rural Mason Training program under PMAY-G addresses the shortage of skilled

masons, ensuring quality housing and creating rural livelihoods. Supported by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), it has enrolled 3,75,265 candidates and certified 3,02,377 masons as of 25.11.2025.

Women's Empowerment: By encouraging house ownership in women's names or jointly with spouses, PMAY-G enhances women's property rights and social standing. The National Institute of Public Finance & Policy (NIPFP) Study Report (2019) notes that this approach contributes to India's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly advancing SDG 5a by supporting gender equality and sustained empowerment.

AI-Driven Monitoring in Rural Housing

Modern technology has added a new dimension to rural housing delivery. By using Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning tools, monitoring has become sharper, fraud prevention stronger, and implementation more credible. These innovations ensure that every house built is genuine and every beneficiary verified.

Recommendation System: AI models identify attributes of houses such as walls, roofs, doors, and windows from uploaded photographs. Based on these attributes, the system recommends the most appropriate final photograph for approval, ensuring that only genuine and complete houses are marked as finished.

Anomaly Detection and Fraud Prevention: Machine learning algorithms compare photographs of houses with others in the same locality. If similarities are detected, the system raises alerts to prevent duplication or fraudulent reporting. This adds a strong safeguard against misuse of resources.

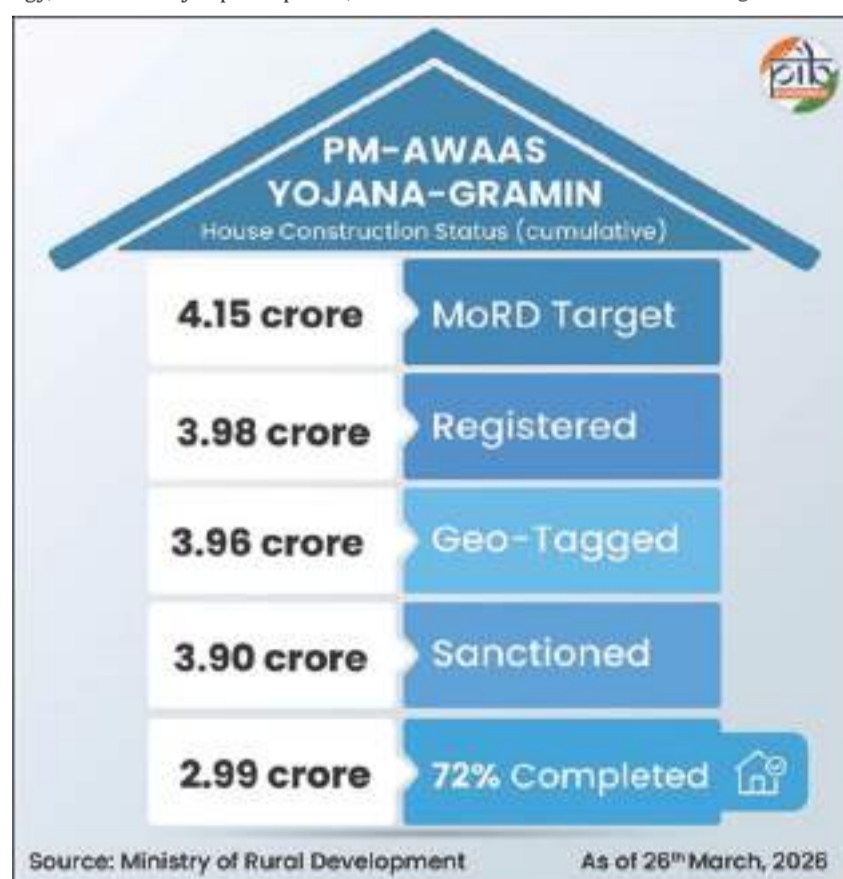
Face Authentication and e-KYC: Beneficiaries are verified through Aadhaar-based, AI-enabled face authentication, ensuring that only eligible households receive support and strengthening the credibility of the database. The Awaas+ 2024 mobile app further enhances transparency in beneficiary identification by integrating Aadhaar face authentication with innovative features such as 3D house designs developed in collaboration with the Central Building Research Institute. This combination of technology and research ensures accuracy, fairness, and accountability in the delivery of benefits.

Liveliness Detection: Advanced features such as eye-blink and motion detection are used during beneficiary verification. These checks confirm that the authentication process is live and genuine, preventing impersonation or misuse.

The Road Ahead

The coming years mark a decisive phase in achieving universal rural housing. With 2.99 crore houses already completed out of 3.90 crore sanctioned under Phase I and II, the programme is steadily advancing toward its cumulative target of 4.95 crore houses by 2029. This progress sets the stage for saturation coverage, ensuring that every eligible household will have a permanent home.

PMAY-G has evolved into one of India's most impactful rural development programmes. By combining housing delivery with dignity, empowerment, and convergence of amenities, it has transformed millions of lives. With a clear roadmap to 2029, the scheme continues to embody the vision of "Housing for All" in rural India.



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

BUDGET SESSION 2026 ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS

Rs 18 Cr DPR prepared for protection works on Basholi water bodies: Deputy CM

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 01: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, Wednesday informed the House that Rs. 18 crore DPR has been prepared for protection works on Behani Khad, Sewa river and other local Nallahs in Basholi area of Kathua district.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, said this while replying to a Calling Attention Notice moved by Legislator Darshan Kumar in the Legislative Assembly Wednesday on behalf of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that 22 families in the villages Jankher (Mora Kund) and Draman (Mora Tikri) falling under Tehsil Basohli, were affected by landslides and heavy rains and temporarily shifted to safer locations by the district administration Kathua. He added that relief under SDRF norms, along with essential relief material including tents/tarpaulins, blankets and ration kits was also provided to them.

He also informed that some affected families have applied for allotment of land and their cases are presently under consideration as per the norms.

The Deputy Chief Minister further said that the IFC department is primarily dealing with the works related to flood



protection and anti-erosion measures pertaining to River/Nallah/Khads. He said that DPR for construction of Flood river training protection works on Behani Khad, Sewa river and

other local Nallahs falling under FCSD Basohli amounting Rs 1800 Lakh under NABARD has been submitted by the IFC Division Kathua to higher authorities.

Rs 93.77 Cr earmarked for construction of sports stadiums in J&K: Satish Sharma

KT News Desk

An amount of Rs. 93.77 crore has been earmarked for construction of sports stadiums in various areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

This information, as per an official statement, was given by Minister for Youth Service and Sports, Satish Sharma, in the House Wednesday while replying to a question raised by Legislator Muzaffar Iqbal Khan.

Legislators Sajjad Shaheen, Balwant Singh Mankotia and R. S Pathania raised the supplementaries to the question



Members withdraw bills after Govt assurance, 2 bills rejected

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, APRIL 01: Several Members Wednesday withdrew their bills after assurances from the Government.

Member, Ajaz Ahmad Jan, as per an official statement, moved a bill which reads "a bill to amend the public men and public servants declaration of assets and other provisions act, 1983 (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 30 of 2025)".

Member, Ranbir Singh Pathania also withdrew the bill which read, "a bill further to amend the Jammu and Kashmir Public Services Guarantee Act, 2011 (L.A. Private Members' Bill No 32 of 2025)."

Legislator, Dr. Rameshwar Singh, moved a bill which reads, "a bill to amend the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Decentralization and Recruitment) Act, 2010 (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 38 of 2025)." However, the Member withdrew the bill after assurances from the Government.

Member, Arjun Singh Raju also moved a bill which reads "A bill to provide better for the better management, protection, administration and governance of Kashmiri Hindu Shrines and religious places in the Union Territory and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto (L.A. Private Members Bill No. 39 of 2025)."

While responding to these Bills, the Chief Minister assured the Members that their issues and concerns shall be addressed. Later the Members withdrew their bills after satisfactory reply from the Chief Minister.

Meanwhile, Member, Abdul Majeed Bhat (Larmi), moved

a bill which read, "A bill to provide prohibition of private practice by the Government doctors in order to strengthen the public health delivery system, ensure full time availability of medical professionals in government institutions like, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto (L.A. Private Members Bill No. 40 of 2025)."

Responding to Bill, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo said that there is complete ban against the private practice by Government doctors during duty hours and both seniors doctors are available on call duty during night hours along with availability of junior doctors at all health institutions.

Meanwhile a bill moved by the Member, Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah reads, "A bill to impose a complete ban on the import of frozen/ chilled food items from outside Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir in order to protect the local food industry and safeguard public health (L.A. Private Members Bill No. 43 of 2025)".

Responding to Bill, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo said that various measures have been undertaken to ensure import of quality food import to Jammu and Kashmir.

She said that Food Safety Department is working to address these issues and there are many testing labs functioning and additional machinery is being put into service for testing purpose.

Another bill moved by Mir Saifullah reads, "A Bill to provide for creation of gainful employment opportunities and for payment of

unemployment allowance/ stipend to unemployed youth and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 5 of 2025)".

Mubarik Gul moved a bill which read, "A Bill to provide social security to unemployed technocrats/professionals in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 18 of 2025)".

Also, a bill moved by MLA Ranbir Singh Pathania reads, "A Bill to amend the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989 (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 33 of 2025)".

The House also continued discussion on bill moved by legislator Pawan Kumar Gupta yesterday which read, "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)".

The Members withdrew these Bills after satisfactory assurances by the Government. Legislators Balwant Singh Mankotia and Dr. Syed Bashir Ahmad Veeri pressed their respective bills for introduction.

The bill moved by MLA Balwant Singh Mankotia reads "A Bill to provide vesting of ownership rights of evacuee property to the occupants (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 15 of 2025)".

Another bill moved by Dr. Syed Bashir Ahmad Veeri reads, "A Bill to amend the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004 (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 24 of 2025)".

The bills were later rejected through voice vote.

Assembly grants 2 month extension to JJM House Committee for report submission

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 01: The Legislative Assembly Wednesday granted two months' extension to the House Committee on Jal Jeevan Mission to submit its report.

The motion was accepted and extension was granted through voice vote.

The Chairman of the House Committee, Justice Hasnain Masoodi, as per an official statement, moved a motion which reads, "that this house do extend the tenure of the House Committee on Jal Jeevan Mission for a further period of three (3) months to enable it to complete its assigned task and submit report."

The House noted that the Committee required time to check works executed under JJM across Jammu and Kashmir and granted three months extension to it to submit the report.

Speaker Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, said that major part of the work has been completed by the House Committee, however, it requires more time to submit the report as there are 3200 WSSs to be examined.

Earlier, Legislators Aijaz Jan, Sham Lal Sharma, Sajad Gani Lone, Mir Saifullah, Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurez), Nizam-ud-din Bhat, Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami and Peerzada Farooq Ahmad Shah raised issues and concerns regarding the implementation of JJM.

The Members asserted for augmenting completed WSSs for public, release of deposits against completed works and execution of pending works under JJM.

Rs 9.78 Cr road constructions under execution in Beerwah: Deputy CM

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 01: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, Wednesday said that the about 30 road construction works have been undertaken for execution under both Pothole and Cities and Towns (C&T) programmes during 2025-26 fiscal.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, was replying to a question, raised by the Legislator Dr Shafi Ahmad Wani in the Legislative Assembly.

Sharing details, the Deputy Chief Minister informed that the works worth an estimated cost of Rs 519.34 lakh undertaken under Potholes programme for execution included improvement of link road from

aarath to Rassu, inner links of Checki Kawoosa and Kawoosa khalisa, Mazhama and Batpora, S.K. Pora and Shipora, Chayers khulchi Road, Lalpora Road, inner Links of Gooripora, Peth Kanihama and Hajibagh Paripora, Peth makhama, Bonmakhama, inner links of Bonhama, upgradation of Meri Pora Rathsuna, Pethkanihama to Cheyra Khalchi Road, Mokdam Mohalla link road at Wamtagam, inner links at Pethmakhama, Rathsu, Rathsun and Chewdara.

He added that other works including upgradation/improvement of link roads at Narbal, improvement of Beerwah Budgam Road, Iskanderpora Loolipora road and macadamization of inner links at Sonapah are under

execution in the Beerwah Constituency.

Similarly, the Deputy Chief Minister, said that as many as 12 works worth Rs. 459 lakh under Cities & Towns have been undertaken for the year 2025-26 in Beerwah Constituency.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the remaining road construction works in Beerwah Constituency shall be executed in near future. He said that no DPRs (Detailed Project Reports) under the nomenclature "Pethkoot-Dasan" and "Hokhlateri" roads are presently under formulation or consideration in the Department under NABARD or any other scheme.

Legislator Saif Ud Din Bhat raised the supplementary question.

Govt strengthening flood monitoring, climate resilience measures: Javed Rana

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 01: Minister for Jal Shakti Javed Ahmad Rana Wednesday informed the House that due to persistently low temperatures during winter, the gauge readings at the Sangam monitoring station in the Jhelum River basin remained around one foot for most of the season.

The Minister, as per an official statement, stated this while replying to a Calling Attention motion moved by MLA Zaidal Tanvir Sadiq in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly during the ongoing Budget Session.

He said that snowmelt in the Jhelum River generally becomes noticeable during March and April as temperatures begin to rise. Following the recent spell of rainfall, the gauge level at the Sangam monitoring station has been recorded at around seven feet. He added that the contribution of snowmelt in river runoff typically continues till the end of May, provided there are no intermediate weather disturbances. With the arrival of the monsoon in late June or early July, runoff levels in water bodies increase again.

The Minister further informed that the Directorate of Ecology, Environment and Remote Sensing (DEERS) has prepared a Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) report, which provides a preliminary



vulnerability assessment of downstream habitations and bridges using basic GIS analysis. The draft report is presently under consultation.

He said that although the Irrigation & Flood Control (I&FC) Department, Kashmir does not have a direct mandate to assess GLOF risks, the Morphology and Climate Directorate of the Central Water Commission (CWC) is monitoring the glacial lakes and water bodies across

the Himalayan and Tibetan regions that drain into India and regularly uploads monitoring reports on its website.

Highlighting the flood monitoring mechanism, the Minister said that in the Jhelum basin, the I&FC Department has installed 22 Automatic Water Level Recorder (AWLR) sensors and 8 rain gauges at key nodal points across the valley to record hourly water level round the clock. The data helps

generate flood forecasts and advance warnings, enabling the administration to take timely preventive measures during flood situations.

He added that the Kashmir Flood Watch app, developed by I&FC Kashmir and available across all digital platforms, also helps alert the residents about changing flood conditions and potential risks.

The Minister further said that to strengthen the climate resilience and water security, several initiatives have been undertaken. These included the promotion of modern irrigation techniques such as micro-irrigation, development of artificial water storage structures and rejuvenation of natural water bodies like lakes and ponds. These efforts are being supported under various schemes including Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority and the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain initiative.

The Minister also informed that DEERS is currently revising the State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC), which is at an advanced draft stage. The revised plan is based on updated temperature and precipitation projections along with sector-wise and district-level vulnerability assessments to enable science-based and location-specific climate interventions.

He said the revised SAPCC

proposes 58 mitigation strategies and 98 adaptation measures across priority sectors. Adaptation efforts focus on slope stabilization, watershed management, forest landscape restoration, ecosystem-based adaptation and climate-resilient infrastructure, while mitigation strategies aim at reducing the greenhouse gas emissions through expansion of clean energy, improved power efficiency, enhanced energy efficiency in buildings, accelerated electric mobility and improved scientific solid waste management.

The Minister further informed that a State Specific Action Plan (SSAP) for the water sector is also being prepared by the I&FC Department in consultation with the Indian Institute of Technology Jammu under the guidance of the National Water Mission, Union Ministry of Jal Shakti. The plan aims to ensure sustainable and equitable water resource management while addressing the regional challenges.

He added that the Status Report on water availability and demand across districts has already been prepared, deriving the water budget for each district and Jammu and Kashmir. An interim report assessing the impact of climate change on water budgets for the years 2032, 2042 and 2052, using the CMIP-6 climate model, is currently under preparation and will form the basis for the final action plan.

House allows introduction of 2 Private Members' Bills for discussion

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 01: The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Wednesday allowed the introduction of two Private Members' Bills moved by Legislators Tanvir Sadiq and Sajad Shaheen for discussion.

The Bills seek restoration of the Jammu and Kashmir Land Grants Act, 1960, and the establishment of a university campus at Banihal in Ramban.

Legislator Tanvir Ali Sadiq, as per an official statement, introduced a Bill which reads: "A Bill to restore the Jammu and Kashmir Land Grants Act, 1960, and the rules framed there under to the original form as it existed prior to the Jammu and Kashmir Land Grants Act, 2022; to protect the rights of existing lessees and occupants; and to ensure that public land serves the interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 35 of 2025)."

Speaking on the Bill, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said that the Government would not oppose the Bill at this stage and would like the House to discuss it.

The Chief Minister said that the Government would like the House to deliberate on the matter in detail. "After that, the Government will take a decision on whether to support this Bill or not. Therefore, at this stage, I will not oppose its introduction," he said.



The Bill was subsequently allowed to be introduced through a voice vote.

Another Bill introduced by MLA Sajad Shaheen reads: "A Bill to provide for the establishment of a university campus at Banihal in District Ramban to promote higher education, research, and socio-economic development in the region and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto (L.A. Private Members' Bill No. 46 of 2025)."

Speaking on the Bill, Education Minister Sakeena Itoo stated that the Government would not oppose its introduction for discussion.

The Bill was subsequently allowed to be introduced through a voice vote.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE



Member Legislative Assembly (MLA), Billawar, Satish Sharma, called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday

PM chairs second

to ensure availability of power during the peak summer months".

Further, interventions proposed to be taken for emerging challenges in various other sectors such as agriculture, civil aviation, shipping and logistics were also discussed.

It added that various efforts like maintaining urea production to meet requirements, coordinating with overseas supplies for DAP/NPKS suppliers are being taken to ensure fertilizer supply. "State governments are being requested to curb black marketing, hoarding, and diversion of fertilizers through daily monitoring, raids, and strict action".

It reads that the retail prices of food commodities have been stable over the past one month. "Control Rooms have been set up for constant monitoring and interaction with States/UTs on prices and enforcement of Essential Commodities Act. The prices of agricultural products, vegetables and fruits are also being monitored".

It further reads that efforts to globally diversify our sources for energy, fertilisers and other supply chains, and international initiatives for securing safe passage of vessels through the strait of Hormuz and ongoing diplomatic efforts are being taken.

"Enhanced coordination, real-time communication, and proactive measures across central, state, and district levels to drive effective information dissemination and public awareness amid the evolving crisis is being undertaken".

PM Modi assessed the availability of critical needs for the common man. He discussed availability of fertilisers in the country and steps being taken to ensure its availability in the Kharif and Rabi seasons.

He said that all efforts must be made to safeguard the citizens from the impact of this conflict. He also emphasised smooth flow of authentic information to the public to prevent misinformation and rumour mongering.

The Prime Minister directed all concerned departments to take all possible measures to ameliorate the problems of citizens and sectors affected by the ongoing global situation. (KNO)

CM assures:

not press it further.

Soon after, PDP MLA Waheed Ur Rehman Para moved a similar bill seeking regularisation of ad-hoc, daily wagers, need-based and other temporary workers. The government opposed the bill, citing similarity with the proposal already discussed.

Para said the issue has been repeatedly raised by all political parties but remains unresolved. He termed it a humanitarian concern and said mere statements would not address the plight of thousands of workers.

During his speech, Para attempted to refer to other issues, including land grants, which led to intervention by the Speaker. He was directed to confine his remarks to the bill under discussion. As Para continued to raise related concerns, the Speaker snubbed him from deviating from the subject.

The situation escalated into a heated exchange, following which Para protested and staged a walkout from the House.

The Chief Minister accused Para and his party of politicising the issue for publicity. He said the government's intent was clear and that it had already made a time-bound commitment on regularisation.

He also rejected allegations made by Para on other matters, including housing, stating that former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti had been allocated accommodation. He said the opposition was spreading misinformation and attempting to mislead the House.

The Chief Minister further alleged that the opposition was deliberately creating disruptions after failing to generate controversy on other legislative matters. He maintained that the government remains committed to addressing the concerns of daily wagers through a structured and legally sound process. (KNO)

'Govt tightens

registration of tourism stakeholders are already regulated under the relevant laws. However, he added that no specific proposal for mandatory rating or certification of all stakeholders is presently under consideration.

Highlighting the importance of service standards, the CM said that visitor experience, behaviour of service providers and hospitality standards are crucial for the growth and sustainability of a successful tourism economy. He

noted that harassment, overcharging or unprofessional conduct can adversely impact the image of a tourist destination.

Responding to a query regarding the decline in tourist inflow due to such issues, he said that no such instance has been reported in the Tourism Department where tourist inflow suffered on account of harassment, overcharging or poor behaviour by stakeholders. "However, isolated complaints have been reported and are being addressed as per rules," he added.

The Chief Minister, who also holds the Tourism portfolio, further informed that regular training and capacity-building programmes are being conducted for stakeholders. These cover areas such as hospitality, etiquette, housekeeping, guiding, front office operations, food & beverage services, homestays, first aid & CPR, rescue operations, responsible tourism and risk management. He reiterated that there is no separate proposal for mandatory certification of all stakeholders at present.

He also stated that a robust grievance redressal and monitoring mechanism is in place through Tourist Reception Centres, tourism helplines, online grievance portals, email channels and Tourist Police. "Complaints are examined, and action is taken as per rules. From January 2025 till date, 508 complaints have been received, of which 413 have been disposed of," the Chief Minister said.

MLA Gurez Nazir Ahmed Khan raised a supplementary question.

Border residents

single day. That service must not be honoured only in words, but reflected clearly in the quality of life of every family, he said.

LG Sinha directed the officials to ensure that no family is left out and no genuine need go unnoticed. "Where existing schemes fall short in Makwal and other border villages, solutions must be created on priority, because for me, the development of border villages is a sentiment, a resolve, and a responsibility," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor said there must be no gap between what the government promises and what people actually receive.

"While planning or executing any scheme, always remember that every family in Makwal and in our other border villages is not just living on the border, but standing guard for India," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He observed that a border village is not the last but first village of India. "To live here, to build a prosperous society here with complete dedication in the service of nation-building and national security is an act of extraordinary courage. Every moment of residents of border villages is the most powerful symbol of patriotism."

The Lieutenant Governor directed that all government officials must remove obstacles and ensure that Makwal and all other border villages receive every required resource.

"Our effort will be to ensure that more resources reach Makwal and other border villages than even the cities of UT. The number of villages formally notified as Vibrant Villages in Jammu District may be limited, but it is the clear effort of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Hon'ble Home Minister Amit Shah that all 541 border villages of Jammu district develop with the same energy and vision," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He further directed for dedicated Nodal officers for border villages and submission of monthly progress report of the villages under Vibrant Villages programme.

The Lieutenant Governor reiterated his resolve to ensure every border village is connected with better roads, fully functional schools, and abundant opportunities for the youth. With this mindset, we must work together to transform all our border villages into model villages, he said.

"We want every child in Makwal to receive the same standard of education that a child in any major city of India receives. We want every farmer here to have access to better seeds, assured irrigation, and reliable markets," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Assuring all the necessary support and assistance to the youth, the Lieutenant Governor said that there is no shortage of talent in Makwal and other border villages.

"What is needed today is the right direction for that talent. We must strengthen youth entrepreneurship and women's self-help groups so that our youth, mothers and sisters are not only the backbone of their own families but also drivers of social and economic progress across the region

Our aim is to make Makwal and other border villages such model villages that young people

can see their future here instead of migrating to the cities. For this, all stakeholders must come together to promote entrepreneurship and provide our youth with training, financial support, and consistent mentoring," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that the Government of India is reaching doorstep of every family in border villages with all the central schemes, and in the last 5-6 years we have tried to ensure that every border village in Jammu Kashmir becomes more prosperous, more vibrant, and truly inspiring.

"Before 2019, around one-third of families in our border blocks were below the poverty line. In the last 5-6 years, a significant proportion of these families has moved out of poverty, and we have sharply expanded road connectivity to nearly every border village. Electricity, which earlier reached only a part of our border hamlets, has now reached almost every home. Telecom connectivity, once limited to a few villages, has now been ensured in all 541 villages, so that no border family remains cut off from the rest of the country," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that since 2020, we have placed special focus on agriculture, dairy, allied sectors, and tourism, leading to notable growth in farm and dairy output and a visible rise in local incomes through initiatives such as fairs and border tourism events.

"Earlier, a sizeable number of families migrated to cities in search of livelihood; after 2019, with new opportunities in self-employment, self-help groups, agriculture, and allied sectors, migration has reduced and village incomes have risen significantly," he further said.

Responding to the demands, the Lieutenant Governor assured that appropriate action will be taken to address the issues of the residents of Makwal.

On land ownership rights of POJK Displaced persons, Lieutenant Governor said that the directions in this regard issued in 2024 are under implementation. He entrusted upon the Divisional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner to ensure their timely implementation.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor initiated various development works through Own Sources of Revenue (OSR). These include: Model Anganwadi Centre, Synthetic Volleyball and Badminton Court, Community Hall with provisions of Library and Computer Lab, Health Sub-Centre at Makwal and Veterinary Dispensary at Sohajana.

The Lieutenant Governor handed over hand-held X-Ray Machine to the health department, and also felicitated TB Warrior, progressive farmers and land donor for establishment of Model Anganwadi Centre.

Appointment orders and Sanction letters were also handed over to various youth of the village and beneficiaries under Mission Yuva and other different schemes.

Surinder Kumar, Member of Legislative Assembly from Marh; Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Shaleen Kabra, Additional Chief Secretary, Jal Shakti Department; Ashwani Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Power Development Department; Anil Kumar Singh, Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works (R&B) Department; R. Alice Vaz, Commissioner Secretary to Government, Planning and Information; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Bhim Sen Tuti; IGP Jammu; Amitava Chatterjee, MD & CEO, J&K Bank; Dr Rakesh Minhas, Deputy Commissioner Jammu; senior officials of army, police and civil administration and people in large number were present. (KNO)

LG calls for

Policy against the drug menace in the Union Territory.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasized on a multi-pronged strategy: Strengthening law enforcement to dismantle trafficking networks, intensive mass awareness campaigns to deter potential users, enhancing treatment and counselling and rehabilitation, to make Jammu Kashmir a drug-free UT.

"Action against drug abuse must be our top priority. We need a collective mechanism to safeguard our youth and ensure a healthy future for Jammu & Kashmir," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He also directed for strengthening grassroots intelligence and coordinated and stringent action against drug smugglers.

The meeting discussed the series of activities planned for a dedicated three-month campaign under Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan. The Lieutenant Governor exhorted the senior officials to lead the campaign from the front and ensure participation of every section of the society and stakeholders to make this campaign a people's movement.

The meeting was attended by Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Nalin Prabhat, DGP; Chandraker Bharti, Principal Secretary Home; S.J.M Gillani, Special DG (Coordination); M.K. Sinha, ADGP Headquarters; Nitish Kumar, ADGP CID; Dr. Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Divisional Commissioners, IGP, DIGs, Deputy Commissioners, Director Information, SSPs and other senior officials. (KNO)

LG welcomes collaboration

Dr. Ashish Chandra Verma, Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production Department; Shailendra Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department; Dr. Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Prof. B. N. Tripathi, Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-Jammu; Dr. Shahidur Rashid, Director, IFPRI-South Asia; Dr. Anjani Kumar, Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI-South Asia; Dr. Sagar Doifode Dattatray, Mission Director, HADP; HoDs, faculty of SKUAST Jammu and other senior officials.

The meeting discussed the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Food Policy and Data Analytics at SKUAST-Jammu in collaboration with IFPRI. The proposed Centre is envisioned as a knowledge hub to support continuous monitoring, policy evaluation and data-driven decision making while also contributing to national

and global discourse on agricultural transformation, particularly in mountain and high-value production systems.

Experts from IFPRI, including Dr. Shahidur Rashid, Director, IFPRI-South Asia and Dr. Anjani Kumar, Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI-South Asia, shared insights on institutional and technical support required for revitalizing agriculture and rural economies. During the meeting, Dr. Anjani Kumar presented a detailed presentation on "Institutional and Technical Supports for Revitalizing Agriculture and Rural Economies in Jammu & Kashmir."

The deliberations also underscored the importance of convergence across key initiatives such as HADP, JKICP and Mission YUVA with a focus on improving farmer incomes, generating employment, strengthening value chains and promoting inclusive growth, particularly for smallholders, women and youth. (KNO)

In a first, NC allows

once they expire. Instead, such leases are to be put to auction afresh at market rates, rather than at the previously negligible premium.

The Bill assumes significance in light of the expiry of leases to hoteliers in Gulmarg.

When the Bill came up for introduction in the House today, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who also holds the Revenue portfolio, stated that he would not oppose it and would allow its introduction.

The bill will be taken up for consideration only after the bills submitted in the House for introduction.

The Speaker then put the Bill's introduction to a vote. The House permitted its introduction as NC members supported it through a voice vote, while opposition parties chose to remain silent.

This was the first Private Member's Bill not opposed by the ruling National Conference at the introduction stage since assuming power.

As per the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Legislative Assembly, the Bill must now clear two more stages—consideration and passage. At the consideration stage, the House will hold a discussion on the Bill.

Meanwhile, the opposition slammed the government over supporting the proposed bill.

In a post on X, Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma accused the National Conference of misusing the public mandate, alleging that the government's move to allow a private member's bill seeking amendments to the Land Grants Act is aimed at protecting elite interests rather than safeguarding public assets and the rights of ordinary citizens.

Sharma said those who voted for the NC believing it would fight for their rights are now feeling let down. "It is with deep regret that I say this: your mandate now appears to be used not for the public good, but to protect elite interests—be it Nedous, the Chief Minister's personal property, or a circle of influential, cocktail-circuit associates," he said.

Referring to the proposed legislation, he said, "A private member's bill titled 'Amendments to the Land Grants Act' was introduced, and the Chief Minister lost no time in permitting it. This raises serious concerns. The move seems to be setting the stage for re-leasing vast tracts of government land at throwaway prices, continuing a pattern that has persisted for decades."

Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone said the bill seeking amendments to the Land Grants Act is aimed at benefiting the super elite of Kashmir.

In a post on X, Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone stated that the bill is "aimed to help the super elite of Kashmir."

"CM sahib allowed the introduction of a private member's bill. The government did not oppose it. The bill pertains to land—specifically to extending leases on government land that have expired. It involves some of the costliest real estate in Kashmir, worth, I would guess, about 70,000 to one lakh crore rupees, or maybe even much more," he said.

He questioned what the bill offers for the poorest sections of society.

"Lakhs of poor families have built houses on 2 or 3 marlas, or at most a kanal. They continue to be persecuted daily. They remain as helpless as they have been for decades. Do they not deserve a bill?" he asked.

He maintained that he is not opposed to the bill itself, but stressed that "it is the super elite who stand to benefit."

Lone further asked the government to disclose the total amount leaseholders have been paying. "May I ask some questions? I asked them in the Assembly but never got an answer. What is the total land in kanals that belongs to the government and has been leased out? What is the lease amount that has been paid till date?" Lone said. (KNO)

'Betrayal of public

and the rights of ordinary citizens. LoP Sharma, per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said those who voted for the NC believing it would fight for their rights are now feeling let down.

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"What message does this send to the common citizen?" he asked, adding, "It is deeply unfortunate that instead of safeguarding public assets and ensuring justice for the marginalised, the government appears to be enabling and patronising a privileged few—those who have long benefited at the cost of the poor. This is not just disappointing; it is a betrayal of trust." (KNO)

Shreya Singhal assumes

senior officers and officials of the DIPR. She

emphasised the importance of transparent, timely and people-centric dissemination of information.

The Director highlighted the role of the Information Department as a vital bridge between the government and the citizens, stating that effective communication remains essential for promoting awareness about developmental initiatives and welfare programmes of the government.

Shreya Singhal reiterated her commitment towards modernising the communication strategies by integrating digital platforms, enhancing media coordination and encouraging constructive engagement with the stakeholders.

Joint Director Information (Hqr), Dr Zahoor Ahmad Raina; Joint Director Information Jammu, Deepak Dubey; Deputy Director Information (PR&AV), Javid Ahmad Rather; other senior officers and officials of DIPR were present on the occasion.

Return of KPs

government or even nobody does not deny. He said successive governments have made efforts to facilitate their return, but conditions on the ground have not yet reached a level where they feel safe to come back.

The Chief Minister said the sense of security among the community was deeply affected and must be rebuilt before any meaningful return can take place. "Without restoring that confidence, expecting their return would not be realistic," he told the House.

He said the government is ensuring that properties belonging to the displaced community are safeguarded. He added that religious places linked to the community remain a priority and all necessary steps are being taken to preserve and protect them.

Referring to earlier legislative efforts, he said attempts were made in the past to bring a bill for safeguarding such properties, but these faced resistance from within sections of the same community. He stressed that any future legislation must have broader consensus to avoid divisions.

The Chief Minister also touched upon narratives around the issue, saying certain portrayals highlight one side while stories of communal harmony and protection often remain underrepresented.

He reiterated that the government is committed to taking all possible measures for the welfare and protection of the displaced community, while working towards conditions that would ensure their safe and dignified return. (KNO)

Tech-driven policing

the Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS).

The Pragati Dashboard report highlights J&K's strong performance across all major indicators. These include robust connectivity of police stations, full implementation of core CCTNS applications, timely data synchronization with the National Data Centre, and effective integration with ICJS components. The Union Territory has also ensured round-the-clock availability of citizen-centric services through its JK Citizen Portal.

Officials said that this achievement will translate into tangible benefits for the public, including faster registration and tracking of cases, improved accuracy of police records, and seamless access to services such as verifications and grievance redressal. It is also expected to enhance coordination across different pillars of the criminal justice system.

By leveraging advanced technology and data-driven processes, J&K Police continues to strengthen transparency, accountability, and public trust, reaffirming its commitment to efficient, responsive, and citizen-centric policing across the Union Territory, said an official. (KNO)

Weather to remain

"On the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway (NH-44), slow movement was reported due to single-lane stretches, with commuters advised to travel during the day and avoid overtaking. Traffic is expected to ply from both sides subject to weather conditions."

"On the Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri road (SSG Road), only one-way traffic will be allowed from Srinagar towards Kargil for light motor vehicles, while heavy vehicles will be permitted up to a specified cut-off time, subject to clearance and weather conditions. The Mughal Road will allow only light motor vehicles and passenger cars from both sides, with heavy vehicles barred due to maintenance work. Cut-off timings have been fixed for both directions.

On the Kishtwar-Sinthan-Anantnag road (NH-244), vehicular movement remains temporarily suspended as per orders of the authorities," he said, adding, "Security force vehicles will be allowed separately on NH-44, and commuters have been urged to check the latest road status before undertaking travel." (KNO)

Resolution on transfer

and other stakeholders, a phased and mutually agreed transfer of operational control and/or ownership rights of the hydroelectric power projects presently operated by NHPC within the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to the UT Government, in accordance with constitutional provisions and existing inter-governmental arrangements."

The mild-worded resolution is expected to be the center of attention during proceedings on Thursday.

In the past, J&K's regional parties made the return of power projects a top priority in their election manifestos but failed to achieve substantial progress. In their Agenda of Alliance, the PDP-BJP coalition promised that the "State Government will work with the Union Government to explore modalities for transfer of Dulhasti and Uri hydro power projects to J&K as suggested by the Rangarajan Committee Report and the Round Table reports."

The issue also featured prominently in the manifesto of the National Conference for the 2024 Assembly polls, which stated: "Impress upon the Union of India to implement the recommendations of the C. Rangarajan Committee report in letter and spirit. All other hydro power projects be transferred to Jammu and Kashmir as per agreement." (KNO)

Congress to bring in law to protect infiltrators in Assam, if it comes to power: PM

PTI

Gogamukh (Assam), Apr 1: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday alleged that the Congress, if it comes to power in Assam, will bring in a law to protect infiltrators, which the BJP and its allies will not allow.

Addressing a poll rally at Gogamukh in Dhemaji district, Modi claimed that the Congress aims to "turn the majority community into a minority and create a permanent vote bank of infiltrators".

Before the BJP came to power in 2014, the Congress had "tried to introduce a new law at the Centre", but the NDA had opposed it, he said. "Congress leaders are openly saying that they will bring a new law in Assam to protect the infiltrators and are openly supporting them," Modi said.

He also accused the grand old party of "trying to divide the country as the Muslim League did during Partition".

"The Congress have also stabbed the Constitution prepared by Babasaheb Ambedkar," Modi said.

"For the Congress, there are two families - one in Delhi and another in Assam, and their priority is the interest of their families and not that of the people," the Prime Minister said.



He was alluding to the Gandhi family and that of state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi.

The Prime Minister said if the BJP returns to power, it will "implement the Uniform Civil Code and safeguard tribals under the Sixth schedule to protect Assam's identity".

"The BJP's 10-year rule heralded a new dawn of 'seva' (service) and 'sushasan' (good governance) in Assam," he said.

The PM asserted that all are saying that only the BJP-led NDA can build modern infrastructure in Assam. Modi claimed that the

Congress had only built three bridges over the Brahmaputra river in 60-65 years, while "the BJP has constructed five bridges in ten years, which has made the lives and livelihoods of people much easier".

"It is not that Assam lacks resources, but the Congress, in its quest for power, divided the Assamese society and did not let the people of the two banks of the Brahmaputra river meet. The NDA government understood the pain and hardships, and took the initiative of building bridges," Modi said.

He also assured the people

that the Subansiri hydroelectric project will protect Assam from floods.

The BJP, in its manifesto, has announced projects worth around Rs 1,800 crore to make Assam free from the deluge, Modi said.

He claimed that more than 22 lakh poor families have been given pucca houses in the last 10 years of the BJP rule, and the party guarantees to provide the same to 15 lakh more families.

Modi asserted that the BJP's double-engine government will ensure 40 lakh women become 'Lakshpati' from the present count of three lakh. The PM pointed out that the BJP's manifesto has created a roadmap for more government jobs and self-employment opportunities.

He urged the people to vote for the BJP-led NDA in the assembly polls and said, "Modi guarantees that he will ensure Assam's progress further".

"The BJP will make a hat-trick in Assam elections with people's blessings, whereas the Congress will make a century of defeats in elections," he added.

Elections to Assam's 126 assembly constituencies will be held on April 9, with counting of votes on May 4.

Oppn playing politics on West Asia crisis, alleges Rijiju



PTI

New Delhi, Apr 1: The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday witnessed sharp exchanges between Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, who accused the opposition of indulging in politics at a time when the country should be united in the face of the West Asia conflict.

Tempers flared up as Kharge questioned why the government was not holding a discussion on the West Asia crisis in Parliament and attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not being present at the all-party meeting on the issue.

Rijiju hit back at Kharge, accusing him of failing to uphold the dignity of his post

by making "irresponsible" statements and "abusing" the prime minister.

He said none of the Leaders of Opposition (LoPs) attended the all-party meeting, adding that it was unfortunate that the opposition was "playing politics" over the issue.

Kharge condemned the minister's remarks and demanded that he withdraw them. He also accused the ministers of being "dummy", alleging that they held no powers.

"Should we attend to listen to your lecture? What authority do you have? You are all dummy ministers. You don't have power. I condemn such a statement," the Leader of Opposition said.

Rijiju said the Leader of Opposition should talk responsibly while upholding the dignity of the position he holds. "He does not uphold the dignity of his position. He himself gives irresponsible statements. Their Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha also is like that ...," the minister alleged.

Earlier, after Chairman C P Radhakrishnan announced the start of the Question Hour, Rijiju urged the House to sit till late in the evening to take up the government agenda listed for the day.

The Chairman said the House will skip lunch for the day and sit till late in the evening to clear the government's legislative

business, which includes the Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill 2026 and The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

The government has also listed a statutory resolution for levying Special Additional Excise Duty on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) with a prescribed rate of Rs 50 per litre on ATF.

Rijiju said the BJP is ready to sacrifice some of the allotted time remaining with it on the CAPF Bill. "I will not tell other members to sacrifice their time, but we will sacrifice our time as some of our members will speak but for a lesser time. If it is required, we can sit a little after 6 PM," he said.

Reacting to it, Kharge accused the government of forcing its agenda while failing to pay heed to the opposition's concerns. "They bring bills whenever they want. They are ready for a discussion anytime and come out with a statement anytime."

The Leader of Opposition said he has written to the Chair twice for taking up a short-duration discussion on the West Asia conflict, but no time has been allotted. "The entire world is suffering due to LPG, gas and other things and prices are rising here. But why are they not agreeing to a discussion?"

"Whatever we suggest, they disagree. And, whatever they want, they put (in the agenda) and declare forcibly with a voice vote. What is this? Is it democracy?" he asked.

Addressing the Chairman, he said, "We thought that after you came, the opposition would get more justice." The Chairman countered Kharge, saying, "You are getting more time than the treasury benches; I will give you the data."

Rijiju then said that many members raised the West Asia issue in the business advisory committee meeting, where it was stated that the government is not running away from a discussion.

"What the Leader of Opposition is saying is not right. Firstly, the ministers concerned made their statements in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. Then the prime minister made a detailed statement in

Parliament.

"There is a problem here. They want to speak what they want, but they don't want to listen. It is just the opposite happening here. They accuse us but don't listen to the government here," the Parliamentary Affairs minister said.

He said that when an all-party meeting on the West Asia crisis was convened, none of the leaders of the opposition from both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha attended, even though Congress members and those of other opposition parties were present.

During the discussion on the finance bill, he said, opposition members only spoke about LPG, petrol and diesel. He said the finance minister gave a detailed reply, and the prime minister had a detailed discussion via video conferencing.

He said the finance minister told both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha about the steps taken to tackle the crisis and to control the prices, as they have skyrocketed across the world, while there has been no increase in India.

The excise duty has been reduced and "despite handling the situation so well, you (opposition) play politics on the issue", Rijiju lashed out at the opposition.

"Is this an issue to play politics on. There is a crisis in our neighbourhood from where petrol and gas are supplied. The war is not happening because of us. In such a crisis, the opposition is playing politics. It is so unfortunate. This is time for the entire country to stand united. This is not the time for playing politics," Rijiju said. Countering Rijiju, Kharge said, "Where was your prime minister. Where was he? You were there as the government representative; I had also sent our representative. Your prime minister was not there. Should we attend to listen to your lecture? What authority do you have..."

Hitting back, Rijiju said they have always given respect to the Leader of Opposition.

"They only indulge in abusing the prime minister, both inside and outside the Parliament, day in and out. We consider the leader of opposition as senior and think he would talk responsibly while upholding the dignity of the position he holds."

"He does not uphold the dignity of his position. He himself gives irresponsible statements. Their leader of opposition in Lok Sabha also is like that ...," the minister alleged.

The Chairman then announced that the Question Hour will be taken up.

Stock markets begin FY27 on high

Sensex surges 1,186 points, Nifty nears 22,700

PTI

Mumbai, Apr 1: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed nearly 2 per cent higher on Wednesday, in tandem with a sharp rally in global markets on hopes of a potential de-escalation in the ongoing West Asia conflict.

Starting the new fiscal year on a high note, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,186.77 points or 1.65 per cent to settle at 73,134.32. During the day, it surged 2,017.03 points or 2.80 per cent to 73,964.58. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 348 points or 1.56 per cent to end at 22,679.40.

A drop in crude oil prices also boosted the market sentiment.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Trent, InterGlobe Aviation, Adani Ports, Bharat Electronics, State Bank of India and Etern emerged as the major gainers. NTPC, Sun Pharma, Power Grid, UltraTech Cement and Bharti Airtel were the laggards.

In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi,



Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended sharply higher. Kospi jumped 8.44 per cent, while Nikkei 225 index climbed 5.24 per cent.

Markets in Europe were trading in positive territory.

"Indian equity markets opened the new financial year on a positive note, with stocks soaring on fresh optimism surrounding a potential de-escalation of the Middle East conflict and easing of energy supply disruptions," Ponmudi R, CEO of

Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

President Trump's remarks that the US could withdraw from Iran "whether we have a deal or not" within the next two to three weeks provided the catalyst markets had been waiting for, delivering a broad wave of relief across global risk assets, Ponmudi added.

The US market ended significantly higher on Tuesday. The Nasdaq Composite index surged 3.83 per cent, S&P 500 jumped 2.91 per cent and Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 2.49 per cent.

Over Rs 4000 cr spent on cyclone risk mitigation project since 2011: Govt in RS

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 1: A total of Rs 4,331.68 crore has been incurred under the National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project (NCRMP) since its launch in 2011, aimed at strengthening disaster resilience in coastal states, the government informed the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

In a written reply, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said the first phase of the project, approved in January 2011, saw an expenditure of Rs 2,524.84 crore, while Rs 1,806.84 crore was spent under the second phase, approved in July 2015.

The NCRMP aims to build infrastructure to minimise vulnerability to cyclones and make coastal communities and assets disaster-resilient, while maintaining ecological balance.

The project was implemented in two phases across eight coastal states. The first phase, covering Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, was completed in December 2018.

The second phase covered Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and West Bengal, and was completed in March 2023.

"The Government of India had approved the NCRMP with the overall objective to build better infrastructure for minimising vulnerability to cyclones and making people and infrastructure disaster resilient," Rai said.

Key components of the project included early warning dissemination systems, multi-purpose cyclone shelters, evacuation roads and bridges, saline embankments, underground cabling, and capacity-building initiatives.

The minister also said that for effective implementation, capacity-building efforts were undertaken through training programmes and awareness measures.

A Project Monitoring Unit was set up at the Centre level, with similar mechanisms adopted by states for coordination and monitoring, he added.

Delhi mayor's office receives bomb threat via e-mail; declared hoax

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 1: The office of Delhi Mayor Raja Iqbal Singh received a bomb threat via e-mail on Wednesday, which was later declared a hoax after nothing suspicious was found, an official said.

According to a senior police officer, the e-mail was purportedly sent in the name of a group identifying itself as "Khalistan National Army". Security agencies were immediately alerted, following which security around the mayor's office was tightened and thorough checks were conducted, he said.

The threat was sent to the mayor's official e-mail ID, claiming that the office would be blown up around 2.11 pm.

Police said that cyber teams are analysing the origin of the e-mail, and efforts are on to trace the sender.

"In reference to the e-mail received regarding an alleged threat to blow up the Mayor of Delhi with a bomb, it is submitted that immediate verification and necessary action were undertaken," Delhi Police said in a statement.

Staff from Kamla Market police station, along with the Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) and Dog Squad, conducted a thorough and systematic check of the Civic Centre premises, the statement said.

It added that the inspection covered parking areas, the basement, the Mayor's office, and other offices within the Civic Centre.

During the check, no suspicious object or activity was found in the Civic Centre.

Further, the security staff deployed at the Civic Centre have been briefed and issued strict directions to maintain heightened vigilance.

They have been instructed to regularly monitor and check the premises, allow entry only after proper verification, effectively utilise CCTV cameras for surveillance, and immediately inform the local police in case of any suspicious activity, the statement said.

All necessary preventive measures are in place, and the situation remains under control.

Air India crash

What is your deep-rooted agenda, SC asks petitioner; dismisses plea

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 1: What is your "deep-rooted agenda", an irate Supreme Court asked a petitioner on Wednesday while dismissing his plea related to the preliminary investigation report on the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad last June.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joy-malya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi also refused to accept the petitioner's contention that authorities be directed to treat his plea as a representation.

The petitioner had challenged a February 25 order of the Delhi High Court that rejected a PIL seeking that information on the "complete sequence of events" leading to the crash be included in the preliminary investigation report.

"What is your deep-rooted agenda? As if we don't understand the

motive. The people who lost their lives, their family members are not filing (petitions) but you are filing," an anguished CJI told the counsel

Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport. The aircraft burst into flames, killing 241 out of 242 people onboard and 19 people on the ground

The petitioner had urged the high court to "read down" the preliminary investigation report of the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau and direct the authorities to modify the report to include the time-chart of "flame out" of engines and transition of fuel switches, whether mechanical or manual.

The high court said the PIL, which had also sought a direction to the bureau to publish such information in public domain, was "highly misconceived".

Observing that the petitioner should have taken recourse available to him under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the high court said, "Such prayer in our considered opinion cannot be granted."



appearing for the petitioner.

On June 12 last year, Air India flight AI 171, a Boeing 787-8 aircraft en route to London Gatwick, crashed into a medical college hostel complex shortly after take off from Ahmedabad's Sardar

HC issues notice to Kejriwal on ED plea against acquittal in summons cases

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 1: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's stand on a plea by the ED challenging his acquittal in two separate cases lodged against him for not appearing before the agency despite summonses issued in the excise policy case.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma issued notice to the AAP leader on two pleas by the ED against the trial court's January 22 orders, and listed the matter for hearing on April 29.

"Respondent has chosen not to appear despite service (of advance notice). Issue fresh notice and list it for hearing on April 29," the court said.

The agency alleged in its complaint in the trial court that the then chief minister intentionally omitted to obey them by not responding to summonses and did not attend the probe.

It also alleged Kejriwal raised frivolous objections and deliberately created grounds for not attending the probe.

Trump says military could end its Iran offensive in 2 to 3 weeks

AP

Dubai, Apr 1: US President Donald Trump said the military could end its Iran offensive in two to three weeks and will shift responsibility for the Strait of Hormuz to countries that rely on it for oil and shipping as the White House announced a prime-time presidential address Wednesday evening on the war.

Trump expressed frustration Tuesday with allies who have been unwilling to do more to support the US war effort, telling them to "go get your own oil." Trump recently has vacillated between insisting there is progress in diplomatic talks with Iran and threatening to widen the war.

In an interview with pan-Arab broadcaster Al Jazeera, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi acknowledged receiving direct messages from US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff. He insisted, however, that there were no direct negotiations and said Iran has no faith that talks with the US could yield any results, saying "the trust level is at zero."

Trump said the US "will not have anything to do with"



what happens next in the vital waterway that has been closed by the Islamic Republic. Instead, he told reporters, the responsibility for keeping the strait open will rest with countries that rely on it. Gulf states rely on the waterway for both exports and imports, including food, and 20 per cent of the world's oil supply flows through it.

US gas prices jumped past an average of USD 4 a gallon for the first time since 2022 on Tuesday, as the Iran war continues to push fuel prices higher worldwide. Analysts say those high fuel costs will trickle into groceries as businesses' transportation and

packaging costs pile up.

Iranian foreign minister signals willingness to keep fighting. Speaking to Al Jazeera, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi signalled Tehran's willingness to keep fighting no matter what Trump may threaten.

Trump's April 6 deadline for the Strait of Hormuz to open still stands, otherwise he threatened to hit power plants.

"You cannot speak to the people of Iran in the language of threats and deadlines," Araghchi said.

Asked if the United States would launch a ground war in Iran, Araghchi dismissed the idea. "I do not think they would

dare to do such a thing," he said. "Very heavy casualties would await them."

Asked about attacks across the Gulf Arab states, Araghchi again insisted Iran isn't targeting those states, despite repeated attacks on civilian infrastructure like airports, power plants and desalination facilities.

"In reality, they are using the people of the Persian Gulf as human shields," Araghchi said.

Oil falls below USD 100 per barrel

Oil fell below USD 100 per barrel and Asian shares jumped Wednesday over renewed optimism about a de-escalation of the Iran war.

Brent crude, the international standard, was down 4.7 per cent to USD 99.05 per barrel.

Benchmark US crude dropped 4 per cent to USD 97.33 a barrel.

South Korea's Kospi recovered its losses from earlier this week, surging 8.4 per cent to 5,478.70, while Tokyo's Nikkei 225 rose 5.2 per cent to 53,739.68.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng was up 2.3 per cent to 25,346.42, while the Shanghai Composite index was trading 1.5 per cent higher at 3,948.55.

Starmer says UK to host multi-nation meeting on Hormuz shipping



AFP

London, Apr 1: Britain will this week hold a meeting of about 35 countries to discuss how to reopen the strategic Strait of Hormuz which has been crippled by the Middle East war, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced Wednesday.

UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper will host the discussions, Starmer told reporters during a Downing Street press conference, without specifying the day of the talks.

The meeting will "assess all viable diplomatic and political measures that we can take to restore freedom of navigation,

guarantee the safety of trapped ships and seafarers and resume the movement of vital commodities," Starmer said.

"Following that meeting, we will also convene our military planners to look at how we can marshal our capabilities and make the strait accessible and safe after the fighting has stopped," he added.

The discussions will include countries who recently signed a statement saying they were ready "to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz," Starmer said.

Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the Netherlands

are among those to have signed it.

Iran has virtually closed the vital strait since the US-Israeli strikes that started the war on February 28, causing global oil and gas prices to soar.

A fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passes through the strait in peacetime.

"I do have to level with people on this. This (reopening) will not be easy," Starmer said.

The UK leader also backed NATO following renewed criticism of the eight-decade-old alliance by US President Donald Trump.

"NATO is the single most effective military alliance the world has ever seen, and it has kept us safe for many decades, and we are fully committed to NATO," Starmer said.

Trump told Britain's Telegraph newspaper in an article published Wednesday that NATO was a "paper tiger."

Asked whether he would reconsider US membership, he replied: "Oh yes, I would say (it's) beyond reconsideration," the paper reported.

Last month, Trump told the Financial Times that it would be "very bad for the future of NATO" if members fail to help reopen the vital waterway.

Iran agrees to allow safe passage of six fuel carrying ships to Bangladesh

PTI

Dhaka, Apr 1: Iran on Wednesday said its Security Council has approved safe passage to Bangladesh's six fuel-carrying ships waiting to cross the Strait of Hormuz amid continued war in West Asia.

As petroleum reserves continue to dwindle in Bangladesh, heavily dependent on imported fuel, five LNG shipments from Qatar and one crude oil cargo from Saudi Arabia, carrying nearly 5 lakh tonnes of LNG and around 79,000 tonnes of crude oil are waiting to cross the Strait of Hormuz.

"Iran does not want Bangladeshis to face any hardships and will provide all necessary assistance for transporting fuel through Hormuz," Iranian Ambassador in Dhaka Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi told

a press conference here.

Bangladesh had earlier requested Iran to allow the vessels to pass through the strait following the February 28 attacks by the United States and Israel on Iran and the retaliation by the Islamic nation.

The ambassador, however, expressed disappointment over Bangladesh's official reaction to the Israeli-US attacks on his country, which failed to condemn the aggression violating the UN Charter and the international law.

"Bangladesh has expressed concerns, but we would have been happy to see Bangladesh condemning the aggression on Iran," he said.

Jahanabadi said the previous US administration avoided falling into what he called an "Israeli trap" but claimed that President Donald Trump had done so under Israeli influence and instigation bringing the "entire region into war."

Abhishek, Kishan stay 1-2 in ICC T20I rankings



PTI

Dubai, Apr 1: Swashbuckling India batters Abhishek Sharma and Ishan Kishan retained the top two spots in the latest ICC T20I player rankings released on Wednesday.

Abhishek leads the chart with 875 points, followed closely by Kishan at 871. They are joined in the top 10 by Tilak Varma, who

is placed sixth, and India T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav is in seventh position.

Veteran England wicketkeeper batter Jos Buttler (up one place to eighth) and New Zealand's Tim Seifert (down one spot to ninth) are the only players within the top 20 to register movement this week.

South Africa batter Connor Esterhuizen has continued his

recent rise by making giant strides. Esterhuizen made an immediate impact when commencing his international career during South Africa's recent T20I series in New Zealand, with the 24-year-old amassing a total of 200 runs to be adjudged the Player of the Series.

It helped him jump from outside the top 100 spots for T20I batters to 39th overall, capping a fine fortnight for the hard-hitting right-hander and the Proteas as they claimed a narrow 3-2 series triumph.

Esterhuizen's haul of 200 runs was double more than anyone else managed across the five-game series, with New Zealand keeper Tim Robinson (up two places to equal 32nd) also making ground on the list for T20I batters following his 81 runs against the Proteas.

IPL 2026: Just unfortunate that Green has not been able to bowl so far, says Nayar

FIANS

Kolkata, April 1: Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) head coach Abhishek Nayar said it was 'just unfortunate' that Australian all-rounder Cameron Green has not been able to bowl so far in the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL), adding that the franchise's long-term plan was for him to be identified as a replacement for Andre Russell.

Green, purchased by KKR for a jaw-dropping Rs 25.2 crore at last year's IPL auction, didn't bowl an over in their season opening six-wicket defeat to Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday, with Cricket Australia (CA) confirming that his bowling



duties are restricted at the moment due to a 'lower back injury' and can resume it after 10-12 days.

"There are things that sometimes are very unfortunate; it's not in your control, but that's the sport, and that's the beauty of the sport. So, we always consider best-case scenarios. Yes, you want back-ups; you pick players who do certain things.

India set for stern test against Japan in U20 Asian Cup football opener



PTI

Pathum Thani (Thailand), Apr 1: The Indian U20 women's national football team is set to kick off its AFC U20 Women's Asian Cup Thailand 2026 campaign against formidable Japan on Thursday in its bid to end a 20-year-old wait to play in the tournament.

For India, this is more than just an opening fixture, it is the beginning of a journey that has been carefully constructed over months, across continents, and with a clear identity in mind.

India qualified for the tournament for the first time in two decades, and head coach Joakim Alexandersson emphasised both realism and ambition ahead of the opener.

"We are very much aware that we are new to this scene right now with the India team. We know we are facing tough opponents and we have respect for them," said the Swede.

"But also, we have a mindset that we want to make it through this group and qualify for the World Cup. That would be fantastic for the whole country," he added.

India's preparation for the tournament has been extensive and methodical.

From friendly matches in Kazakhstan to a month-long training camp in Sweden, the focus has been on developing a squad capable of handling the demands of elite competition.

"We have been together continuously for three months," Alexandersson said.

"Before that, we had friendly games in Kazakhstan. We have been to Sweden for a one-month camp, and we invited Uzbekistan to India as well.

"So the preparation has been good. I think we are ready for this tournament in a good way. Since the qualifiers in Myanmar, we have had some very focused work. We have evolved considerably -- technically, tactically, and also mentally as a group. We are confident that our preparation has put us in the best place possible," Alexandersson explained.

Standing in India's way in the opening match is one of the world's most formidable sides.

Japan, record six-time champions of the U20 Asian Cup, arrive as one of the favourites, with a long-standing reputation for technical excellence and consistency at the youth level. The Young Nadeshiko were also world champions in 2018.

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