



Character of warfare witnessing profound transformation: CDS Chauhan

- » Visits strategically important areas under Chinar Corps
- » Reviews security landscape, operational posture along LoC
- » In Baramulla, commanders brief him on tech infusion

KNO Monitoring Desk

Srinagar, Apr 04: Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Anil Chauhan on Saturday said that the character of warfare is witnessing profound transformation necessitating a shift from domain-centric approach to multi-domain operations. According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the CDS while addressing the officers of the Srinagar based Chinar Corps here said that the character of warfare is undergoing profound transformation, necessitating a shift from "Domain-Centric Approach to Multi-Domain Operations (MDO), underpinned by a robust & integrated architecture."

He underscored the centrality



of jointness, stressing that seamless integration across Land, Air, Maritime, Cyber, Space and Cognitive domains is indispensable for achieving decisive outcomes. He called for accelerated Joint Training for Futuristic Warfare, Harmonisation of Doctrines and development of Interoperable Command and Control Structures to enable synchronised effects, across all domains.

CDS Chauhan visited the strategically important areas under Chinar Corps, Srinagar and reviewed the security landscape and operational posture along LoC in North Kashmir and commended the formation's exemplary operational preparedness,

doctrinal coherence and resolute professionalism. At Baramulla, he was briefed on Future Force Application & Technology Infusion.

The CDS, as per the statement, emphasised the need for a deliberate roadmap to counter emerging challenges - one that fosters technological adaptation, cognitive resilience and collective preparedness through integrated efforts.

He reiterated that preparation for the threats envisaged must be anchored in foresight, innovation, a unified warfighting philosophy and Whole of a Nation effort. He highlighted the importance of operational readiness and resilience in the face of evolving | [More on P6](#)

J&K Assembly's budget session culminates

House adjourned sine die

22 sittings held, 110 hours & 6 mins spent

8 bills passed, 36 pending

Waris Fayaz

Jammu, Apr 04: The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly was adjourned sine die on Saturday, marking the conclusion of the first-ever two-phase Budget Session in the Union Territory's history.

The session, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), began on February 2, 2026, in Jammu and continued until February



20 before being adjourned for the Ramadan | [More on P6](#)

Speaker hails efforts of DIPR, depts

KT News Desk

Speaker, J&K Legislative Assembly (JKLA), Abdul Rahim Rather on Saturday expressed deep appreciation for the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) and other line departments for their | [More on P6](#)

Rather hailed for successful Budget Session

KT News Desk

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary and Legislators on Saturday commended

the Speaker Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, for smooth and efficient conduct of the Budget Session-2026. The Deputy Chief Minister praised the | [More on P6](#)

House passes Jan Vishwas 2nd (Amendment of Provisions) Bill

KT News Desk

Jammu, Apr 04: The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Saturday passed the Jammu and Kashmir Jan Vishwas Second (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 (L.A. Bill No. 07 of 2026).

The Bill was moved for consideration and passing by Minister for Agriculture Javid Ahmed Dar on behalf of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

While moving the motion, the Minister said, "A Bill to amend certain enactments, decriminalising and rationalising offences for ease of living and ease of doing business, and also to repeal certain enactments (L.A. Bill No. 07 of 2026), be taken into consideration."

The Bill was subsequently taken up for consideration and passing by the Speaker before the House and was passed. Members Nizam-ud-din Bhat, | [More on P6](#)

Chill returns to Kashmir amid fresh snowfall, widespread rains

- Gurez, Tulail, Gulmarg turn white
- Plains record heavy downpour
- MeT warns of flash floods till April 10
- Traffic disrupted, multiple roads shut
- Slow traffic on Sgr-Jammu highway
- Mughal Road open for limited hours

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Apr 04: A chill returned to Kashmir on Saturday as fresh snowfall in the upper reaches and rains across the plains sent temperatures plunging across the region.



An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that Gurez, Tulail, Gulmarg and Sonamarg received fresh snowfall, while widespread rains lashed the plains across the Valley.

According to rainfall data for the past 24 hours ending 8:30 am, Baramulla recorded 45.5 mm of rain, followed by Nowgam Handwara at 45.6 mm and Lolab at 42.2 mm.

Srinagar received 25.1 mm of rainfall, while the airport recorded 29.2 mm. Budgam and Kulgam recorded 24 mm and 24.2 mm respectively, while Sopore received 22.8 mm.

In the Jammu region, Rajouri recorded the highest rainfall at 61 mm, followed by Batote at 53.8 mm and Poonch at 45.5 mm. Udhampur received 31.7 mm and Katra 32.2 mm, officials said. | [More on P6](#)

'Over 3.21 lakh category certificates issued in J&K in two years'

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Apr 04: The Jammu and Kashmir government has issued 3,21,165 reservation and social category certificates across the Union Territory over the last two years, while 1,01,436 applications were rejected and 9,346 cases are still pending, as per official data tabled in the Assembly.

The information was provided in response to a starred question (AQ No. 591) raised by MLA Waheed-ur-Rehman Para regarding district-wise issuance of certificates across Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the official reply accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), certificates for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST-1 & ST-2), Other Backward Classes (OBC), Residents of Backward Areas (RBA), and Actual Line of Control/International Border (ALC/IB) are being issued under the provisions of the J&K Reservation Act, 2004 and rules framed thereunder.

The data reveals that out of the total certificates issued, Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificates accounted for the highest share at 1,05,908, followed by OBC certificates at 97,179, SC certificates at 65,700, RBA certificates at 61,155, EWS certificates at 32,165, and ALC/IB certificates at 5,025. | [More on P6](#)

J&K Private Universities Bill passed

CM Omar hails passage; congratulates Sakeena Itoo, stakeholders

KT News Desk

Jammu, Apr 04: The J&K Assembly on Saturday passed the Jammu and Kashmir Private Universities Bill, 2026 (L.A. Bill No. 08 of 2026) on establishment and incorporation of private universities in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Bill moved by Minister for Education, Sakeena Itoo, read, "A Bill to provide for the establishment and incorporation of Private Universities in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, and to regulate their functioning, management, and academic standards for ensuring quality education and protecting the interests of students."

Speaking regarding the Bill, the Education Minister said that the Government has taken into consideration all the issues and concerns regarding Higher Education sector in Jammu and Kashmir before formulation of this Bill. She further said that this Bill will pave the way for establishing Private Universities and will boost the Higher



Education sector here. She added that numerous students of Jammu and Kashmir will be benefited by this as they used to go outside J&K for achieving Higher education.

Legislators, Mir Saifullah, Nizam-ud-din Bhat, Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah and Tanvir Sadiq had moved amendments on the Bill. These Legislators withdrew their amendments after assurances by the Education Minister.

Legislator Balwant Singh Mankotia had also moved an amendment, which was rejected through a voice vote.

Later, the Speaker put the Bill to | [More on P6](#)

Over 2,100 waste segregation sheds constructed in J&K in 3 years: Govt

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Apr 04: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Saturday informed the Legislative Assembly that a total of 2,147 waste segregation sheds have been constructed across the Union Territory over the past three financial years, of which 1,491 are currently functional.

Replying to an unstarred question tabled by MLA Dr Bashir Ahmad Shah Veeri, the government, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that the sheds were constructed during 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 at a total expenditure of Rs

6,81,64,60 lakh.

Providing year-wise details, the government said that 1,851 sheds were constructed in 2023-24 with 1,229 functional, followed by 156 sheds in 2024-25 with 166 functional, and 140 sheds in 2025-26 with 96 functional.

The government further informed that the waste segregation process begins with collection at the Panchayat level, followed by transportation to designated sheds where waste is segregated into wet and dry categories. Wet waste is processed through compost pits to generate "waste to wealth," while dry waste is further segregated | [More on P6](#)

Mega medical camp in Budgam brings specialist healthcare to rural populations

Free consultations, treatments provided at PHC Surasyar; locals hail initiative

Naveed Ul Haq Ganaiee

Budgam, Apr 04: The Health Department on Saturday organised a Mega Medical Camp at Primary Health Centre (PHC) Surasyar in Chadoora area of central Kashmir's Budgam district, bringing specialist healthcare services to the doorsteps of people living in rural and far-flung areas.

The camp, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), organised under the supervision of the Block Medical Officer

(BMO) Chadoora, witnessed a large turnout of patients from Surasyar and its adjoining villages, who availed free consultations, medical check-ups and treatment.

Specialist services were provided in key departments including Ophthalmology, ENT, Orthopaedics and Gynaecology, addressing a wide range of health issues among the rural population.

Officials said the initiative was aimed at strengthening healthcare delivery at the grassroots level | [More on P6](#)

J&K Govt unveils comprehensive health sector revamp plan

Recruitment, infrastructure top priorities | Over 1,800 vacant posts to be filled | Focus on digital health, new facilities

Jahangeer Ganaiee

Srinagar, Apr 04: Health and Medical Education Minister Sakeena Itoo on Saturday informed the Legislative Assembly that the J&K Government has rolled out a comprehensive and multi-pronged strategy to strengthen the healthcare sector across the Union Territory.

While replying to a question raised by MLA Sunil Bhardwaj, the Minister as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said that since assuming

office, the government has prioritized expansion and upgradation of healthcare infrastructure, alongside strengthening human resources and public health initiatives.

"The plan includes enhancement of hospital facilities across districts, expansion of infrastructure in newly established medical colleges, and capacity building in nursing institutions to improve training standards," she said, adding, "To address manpower shortages, the government has accelerated recruitment

processes. Over 480 posts of Medical Officers have already been referred to the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission, while contractual engagements under the National Health Mission (NHM) and academic arrangements are being utilized to meet immediate requirements."

Itoo said that digital health services such as e-Sanjeevani teleconsultation are being expanded and aligned with the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission to improve access,



particularly in remote areas. Public health efforts are also being intensified, with

targeted interventions aimed at tuberculosis elimination by 2025 and strengthened

immunization coverage under Mission Indradhanush.

SHORTAGES OF MEDICAL, PARAMEDICAL STAFF STILL PERSISTS

Despite these initiatives, the Minister acknowledged that shortages of medical and paramedical staff persist in certain institutions. She attributed this to a limited pool of specialists in critical disciplines, procedural delays in recruitment, migration of skilled professionals, and reluctance

among staff to serve in remote and difficult areas.

To overcome these challenges, the government is implementing policy measures including hardship allowances, incentives for rural postings, fast-track recruitment, and rationalization of existing manpower. Capacity building is also being undertaken through the establishment of new medical colleges and paramedical institutions.

Providing details, the Minister said that 834 gazetted posts have | [More on P6](#)

Departure of Hajj Pilgrims: Div Com Kashmir reviews preparations



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, APRIL 04: In preparation for the upcoming Hajj pilgrimage, the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, Saturday chaired a high-level meeting to review arrangements for the smooth departure of pilgrims.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Deputy Commissioners from across Jammu & Kashmir and Kargil, besides departments including Airport Authority, Emigration, Customs, Tourism, Public Works (R&B),

PHE, KPDC, Health, Transport, Traffic, Police, CISF, J&K Bank, and other concerned agencies.

Hajj flights are scheduled to operate from April 18 to April 28, 2026. This year, a total of 4,706 pilgrims from Jammu & Kashmir will undertake the sacred journey of Hajj.

Emphasizing the importance of coordinated efforts, the Divisional Commissioner directed all departments to ensure comprehensive preparations for the pilgrimage. He instructed Deputy Commissioners to oversee arrangements and facilitate

pilgrims effectively.

Special attention was given to ensuring the availability of essential services at the Hajj House, including uninterrupted electricity and water supply, sanitation, and healthcare facilities.

The Divisional Commissioner further instructed J&K Bank to maintain adequate availability of foreign exchange in lower denominations to avoid inconvenience to pilgrims. He also called for proper boarding and lodging arrangements for pilgrims arriving from Jammu and Ladakh. To ensure

Deputy CM inaugurates bridge at Bus Stand Jammu



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, APRIL 04: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary Saturday inaugurated vital single span RCC Bridge and allied works at Bus Stand, Jammu.

Termining the bridge a significant utility for all regions of Jammu and Kashmir, the Deputy Chief Minister, who was accompanied by local MLA Yudhvir Sethi, said that it will enhance the mobility and transport facilities for the people of J&K. He said that the bridge, damaged during last year floods, was reconstructed in

a record time.

"The bridge was not merely a structure but a lifeline for livelihoods, transport and connectivity across Jammu, Kashmir and the Chenab Valley," maintained the Deputy CM.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the government is committed to public welfare and robust development being carried out across the Union Territory.

Addressing a gathering of locals, members from transport and markets associations and other stakeholders, the Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement,

highlighted his determination to infrastructure development and public welfare with the successful reconstruction and inauguration of a vital bridge in Jammu.

He also acknowledged M L A Yudhvir Sethi's persistent efforts in ensuring timely completion of the project. Recalling the devastating floods that had washed away the bridge a few months ago, the Deputy Chief Minister noted the sense of helplessness among the stakeholders and the urgent need to restore it.

The Deputy Chief Minister also assured the stakeholders that their other concerns, such as parking issues, traffic regulation and operational challenges at the bus stand, would be addressed promptly. He said that despite challenges, the government has prioritized to ease the public difficulties and deliver on its promises.

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MLA Yudhvir Sethi and members from stakeholders also spoke on the occasion and expressed their appreciation for the Deputy Chief Minister and concerned department for ensuring time bound completion of the ambitious project.

Panchayat Electoral Roll: Special Summary Revision Camp held at DH Pora

KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, APRIL 04: As part of the ongoing Revision of Panchayat Electoral Roll 2026, a Special Summary Revision Camp was organized Saturday at D.H. Pora to facilitate the enrolment of eligible voters and update electoral records.

The programme, as per an official statement, was presided over by the District Panchayat Election Officer (DPEO) (Deputy Commissioner) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam.

The initiative was aimed at ensuring maximum participation of eligible citizens in the electoral process and facilitating them in updating their details in the Panchayat electoral rolls.

During the camp, several new eligible voters were enrolled on the spot, while citizens were also facilitated in submitting forms for inclusion, deletion, correction and transposition in the Panchayat electoral rolls.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, the DPEO emphasized the importance of maintaining accurate and updated electoral rolls for strengthening grassroots democracy and ensuring transparent Panchayat elections.

He urged citizens, particularly those who have attained the age of 18 years as on 01-04-2026, to verify their details and ensure inclusion of their names in the electoral rolls within the stipulated timeframe.

On the occasion, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Noorabad, who is also Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and Deputy District Election Officer Kulgam, was present along with Tehsildar DH Pora, Block Development Officers, CDPO Kulgam, Master Trainer, PEBOs, BLOs, Aanganwadi Workers (AWWs) and a large number of citizens from DH Pora.

DC Budgam reviews developmental projects, key public issues of sub-division Beerwah

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, APRIL 04: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam Athar Amir Khan Saturday convened a comprehensive review meeting to assess the progress of developmental projects and address key public issues in Sub-Division Beerwah.

The meeting, as per an official statement, covered all major sectors and departments, with a detailed overview of the administrative and infrastructural landscape of the sub-division, which comprises four tehsils (Beerwah, Khag, Magam, Narbal), 162 revenue villages, six blocks, two municipalities, and multiple health and engineering divisions.

The chair was apprised by SDM Beerwah, Taufeeq Gazi, regarding various departments aspects of Sub-division Beerwah. Threadbare discussions were held on several road projects, vital ongoing bridges, Revenue Buildings at Magam, Narbal and Poshker, status of several Water Supply Schemes, Plastic Waste



Management Unit at Rathsun Panchayat Ghar Mamgund, Panchayat Ghar Najan Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant at Goripora, establishment of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV), shifting of HT Line over Beerwah Bridge, illegal extraction in Nallah Sukhnag, regulation of brick kilns, hospitals of Magam, Khag and Beerwah, ATM in SK pora block, street lights repair, upgradation of casualty block of SDH Magam etc.

The DC stressed the need for

strict adherence to timelines and directed all departments to adopt a proactive and result-oriented approach. He emphasized that inter-departmental coordination is crucial for timely execution of projects and resolution of public issues.

He further instructed officers to conduct regular field visits, closely monitor progress on the ground, and ensure that bottlenecks are identified and addressed promptly.

DC Anantnag visits Aishmuqam Shrine, takes stock of Annual Urs arrangements

KT NEWS DESK

ANANTNAG, APRIL 04: On the auspicious occasion of the annual Urs of the revered saint Sakhi Zainuddin Wali (RA), the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat, on Thursday visited the Aishmuqam shrine and took stock of the arrangements made for its smooth observance.

The DC, as per an official statement, was accompanied by the ADC, ACR, ASP, and other senior officers from the administration and various concerned departments.

On the occasion, the DC took a first-hand review of the facilities put in place



for devotees who had thronged the holy site from different areas. He issued directions to the concerned officials to ensure that the devotees receive all necessary amenities and have a seamless experience during their stay. Interacting

with the devotees, Dr. Bilal took their feedback about the arrangements and also offered ceremonial prayers, praying for the prosperity and overall well-being of the people.

During the visit, a thorough inspection of

essential services including uninterrupted power and water supply, sanitation, and waste management, besides crowd management by local authorities, was conducted.

Calling the annual Urs of Sakhi Zainuddin Wali (RA) "a symbol of our rich cultural and spiritual heritage," the DC said it is a priority to provide facilitation and convenience to the devotees so they feel the support of the administration.

Notably, thousands of devotees participated in the Zool Festival, reflecting a sense of the deep traditional and cultural ethos cultivated by the people of the area.

Irrigation and Flood Control Division Ganderbal

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER

e-NIT No: 05 of 2026-27 (e-Tendering)

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, e-Tenders (in Two Cover System) are invited on Item Rate Basis from approved and eligible contractors registered with Union Territory of J & K Government for the following works to be opened by the Executive Engineer Irrigation and FC Jal Shakti Division Ganderbal: -

S No.	Name of Work	AAA	Advertisement Cost (in Lacs)	Cost of Tender Doc. (In Rs)	Earnest Money in Rs.	Time of Completion	Class of Contract	Head of A/C M-H
01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
01	Construction of temporary accommodation at Baltal for staff	Superintending Engineer Hydraulic Circle Sgr/GBI	5.00	500/-	15,000/-	15 Days	DEE	MH 5452 REVEK CAPEX

Position of Funds: 100% Budgetary Provision.

Position of AAA: Accorded

Position of TS: Accorded

1) The bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, set of terms and conditions and other details can be seen/downloaded on e-procurement Portal www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:

01	Publishing Date	03-04-2026	06:00 P.M
02	Download Date Start	03-04-2026	06:00 P.M
03	Bid submission Date Start	03-04-2026	06:00 P.M
04	Bid submission Date End	09-04-2026	04:00 P.M
05	Bid opening Date	10-04-2026	11:00 A.M

The bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in

2) The bids uploaded on the Web site up to due date and time will be opened on 10.04.2026 at (11:00 AM) in the Office of the Executive Engineer Irrigation and Flood Control Division Ganderbal in presence of the bidders who wish to attend. In case of Holidays or office happening to be closed on the date of opening of the bids, the same will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. The complete bidding process will be online.

4) Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender document (Non-Refundable/ Non-transferrable) to be deposited under MH: 0702-Rev. Misc. in shape of Treasury Challan / receipt or e-Challan (mentioning therein e-NIT No and Serial No of Work) to be pledged in favour of the Executive Engineer Irrigation and FC Jal Shakti Division Ganderbal and earnest money/ bid security in shape of CDR/FDR pledged to the Executive Engineer Irrigation and Flood Control Division Ganderbal, besides the dates on the instruments must not be prior to date of issuance of this Notice. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 90 days from the date of opening of Price bids.

5) All the prospective bidders shall necessarily ensure that the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in shape of CDR/FDR/TDR/BG or any other approved format has been prepared and issued from the same bank account which shall be provided for payments. The details of such bank account shall be uploaded by the prospective bidder necessarily.

6) The documents to be uploaded by all the bidders shall be verified from the issuing authority before accepting the technical bid. If any document uploaded by the prospective bidder is found to be fabricated/forged/fraud, the bidder shall be outrightly rejected and action as warranted under rules shall be initiated against such bidder which shall include but not limited to:

A) Debarment of the bidder for at least two years.

B) encashment of the Earnest money deposit.

C) criminal proceedings.

D) Cancellation of Pre Contract Negotiations of all other works where such bidder is lowest or under consideration bids.

7) Every participating supplier/ contractor to mandatorily disclose the bank account number which is linked with their GSTIN at the time of bid submission. No payments shall be released by the Government Department/ Agency to any other bank account except the one linked with the GST registered number of the successful bidders.

All other terms and conditions as laid down in the GFR-2017, Manual for procurement of works 2022 with upto date amendments, PWD Form 25 Double shall also remain in force.

NO: IFCD/GBL/ 276-325

Dated: 03.04.2026

(Er. Iftikhar Nadeem Mattoo)
Executive Engineer
Irrigation and Flood Control
Division Ganderbal

DIPK-135/26
DATED: 04-04-2026

Legislators raise key public issues in LA

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Apr 04: Several important public issues were raised by the Members during the Zero Hour in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Saturday, seeking timely intervention and action from the government.

MLA Ghulam Ahmad Mir raised the issue that fuel required for agricultural and horticultural machinery is not being adequately provided to the farmers in South Kashmir in view of the restrictions on loose sale of fuel by petrol pump.

MLA Rajiv Jasrotia demanded bifurcation of ration cards so that the deserving citizens can avail the benefits of various social welfare schemes of the Union Territory and the Central Government.

MLA Khurshid Ahmad demanded that Gool Gulabgarh be granted the status of a Pahari district.

MLA Balwant Singh Mankotia sought that copies of speeches and proceedings of the House be provided to all legislators as per the past practice.

MLA Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami highlighted the shortage of LPG and demanded that people who have not yet registered for e-KYC should also be facilitated to receive benefits, with necessary directions issued to the concerned authorities.

MLA Ghulam Mohi-ud-din Mir raised the issue of



equitable distribution of irrigation water between the areas of Pulwama and Budgam districts as the issue could spiral into a controversy between the people living here.

MLA Ali Mohammad Dar demanded shifting of Sub-division Kanipora of Chadoora Division from Rambagh area to its original place for the ease of people.

MLA Justice (Retd) Hasnain Masoodi sought installation of an ATM facility at a Wahab Khar Sahib shrine in his constituency for the convenience of devotees.

MLA Qaysar Jamshaid Lone demanded desilting of canals in his constituency to improve the irrigation facilities.

MLA Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurez) highlighted the issue of pending rent for land used by defence forces,

seeking immediate release of payments to the owners.

MLA Mubarak Gul highlighted the need for desilting of canals and nalahs in his constituency.

MLA Muzaffar Iqbal Khan raised concern over high prices of building materials and alleged black marketing due to the closure of crusher plants in his constituency.

MLA Javaid Riyaz Bedar demanded repair of irrigation lifting pumps and adequate power supply to operate these units so that the farmers do not suffer during the agricultural season for breakdown of machinery in these lift stations.

MLA Shakti Raj Parihar pointed out that Doda district is an accident-prone area and demanded priority provision of medical staff, paramedical facilities

and ambulances there.

MLA Kuldeep Raj Dubey raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board aspirants who qualified examinations and sought implementation of directions issued by the Jammu and Kashmir High Court and Central Administrative Tribunal regarding their appointments. He also demanded compensation for the families whose houses were damaged or acquired during road widening.

MLA Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi urged the government to convene advance meetings to ensure proper arrangements for the upcoming Muharram observances.

MLA Sajad Gani Lone sought clarity from the administration regarding the questions related to commercial leases given by the government.

MLA Javid Iqbal Choudhary raised the concern over engagement of teaching staff in Indian Census duties, stating that it adversely affecting the students' studies.

MLA Zafar Ali Khatana demanded exemption from permission requirements for the tribal communities who migrate seasonally to Kashmir Valley with their cattle on foot.

MLA Peerzada Feroze Ahmad demanded opening of a branch of Jammu and Kashmir Bank at Bonigam area of his constituency to facilitate the local residents and businessmen.

FCS&CA intensifies petroleum supply vigil

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Apr 04: In view of the prevailing geopolitical situation affecting petroleum supply chains, the Directorate of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA), Kashmir has intensified its monitoring mechanisms to ensure uninterrupted availability and delivery of petroleum and LPG products to consumers across the valley.

The Directorate is conducting regular inspections to curb hoarding and black marketing of petroleum products. So far, a total of 2427 inspections have been conducted across the Kashmir Division from 19 March 2026, during which 14 cases of hoarding and 6 cases of black marketing

have been detected. Additionally, 108 LPG cylinders have been seized, and a total fine of Rs. 40,500 has been imposed and Oil Marketing Companies have been directed to maintain sufficient stocks at all distribution points to guarantee timely and hassle-free delivery to the public.

To further strengthen consumer support, dedicated helplines have been established to attend to distress calls. Citizens are encouraged to contact the respective Assistant Directors to lodge grievances or report irregularities.

The Directorate remains committed to safeguarding consumer interests and ensuring equitable distribution of essential petroleum products during this period.

Traders flag gaps, Admin vows swift Lal Chowk revamp

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Apr 04: With tourist footfall rising and pressure on civic infrastructure mounting, the Traders Association Lal Chowk on Saturday pitched for a comprehensive revamp of the city's commercial hub during a meeting with the Divisional Commissioner, Srinagar, securing an assurance of phased, time-bound action.

The delegation, led by President Mohammad Iqbal Khan and comprising members Jatinder Singh, Naresh Kumar Mehra and Nisar Ahmad Bhat raised a series of issues ranging from urban planning gaps and traffic congestion to sanitation, pedestrian access and overall aesthetics.

"Lal Chowk is the face of Srinagar's economy and culture. But without planned development and efficient civic management, the pressure of increasing business and tourism is clearly showing," Khan said.

He stressed that the area requires structured urban planning, streamlined traffic and pedestrian movement and sustained beautification to match

its growing importance as both a business district and a tourist destination.

"We are not just asking for fixes, we are seeking a long-term, coordinated vision that makes Lal Chowk organized, accessible and truly tourist-friendly," he added.

As per the details, the association said peak-hour congestion, inconsistent sanitation and lack of coordinated infrastructure upgrades are affecting both traders and visitors, particularly as Srinagar witnesses a steady surge in tourist arrivals.

The traders said the Divisional Commissioner gave a patient hearing to their concerns and assured that the issues would be addressed systematically in a phased and time-bound manner.

"The response was positive. We have been assured that concrete steps will follow, and we expect visible improvements on the ground in due course," Khan said.

Reaffirming its commitment, the association said it will continue to work closely with the administration to ensure effective implementation of the proposed measures—(KNO)

Protect MLAs' dignity, privileges: Speaker

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Apr 04: Speaker Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather on Saturday directed the government to take the corrective measures to maintain the dignity, privilege and protocol of the Members of Legislative Assembly.

He gave these directions while concluding the Short Duration Discussion on the last day of Assembly session.

MLA Pawan Kumar Gupta initiated the discussion on privileges, dignity and protocol of the august House/ Hon'ble Members during Short Duration Discussion. He said

that the dignity of the MLAs have been compromised. He also pointed out that MLAs are not taken into confidence while drafting the development plans of their respective constituencies.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary assured the members that the dignity of the members is our prime concern. He also said that government always takes serious note of the complaints registered by the MLAs and assured strong action against the officers who breaches the privilege of the members.



Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

NHPC employs 13,800 contract workers in J&K: GoI

RAJA SYED RATHER

Srinagar, Apr 04: The Government of India (GoI) has said that around 13,800 contractual workers are currently engaged across various projects of National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) and its joint ventures in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Replying to an unstarred question in Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Power, Shripad Naik informed that these workers are employed through contractors for execution of project-related works in different locations of J&K. The GoI further stated that NHPC ensures that wages paid to contractual workers are higher than the minimum wages notified by the competent

authority. The wage structure also includes statutory and welfare benefits such as Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), Employees' State Insurance (ESI), bonus, and gratuity.

Besides, the contractual workforce is covered under social security schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), along with mediclaim benefits. Workers are also entitled to leave with wages, national holidays, and provisions for conveyance, uniforms, and other facilities.

Meanwhile, the Centre informed that the total number of regular employees working in NHPC Limited across the country stands at 4,590 as of March 1, 2026—(KNO)

ACB arrests Thanamandi cop in bribery case

KNO

Jammu, Apr 04: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Saturday trapped and arrested a head constable posted at Police Station Thanamandi in Rajouri for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 10,000 for releasing a seized vehicle.

In a statement issued, a spokesperson said the Anti-Corruption Bureau J&K registered a formal case against Mohd. Alyas, posted in Police Station Thanamandi Rajouri vide FIR no. 05/2026 at P/S ACB Rajouri u/s 7 of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018) on 04.04.2026 on the basis of a complaint alleging therein that on 13.03.2026 complainant alongwith his family was travelling to Shahdara Sharief Thanamandi in his vehicle (ECHO) and met with an accident near Thanamandi. Due to which, his family members got injured and his vehicle was also damaged.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

NLU in Budgam still in planning stage: Govt

■ MANUU campus project awaits Centre's nod

NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIEE

Jammu, Apr 04: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Saturday said the proposed National Law University (NLU) in Budgam has not been established yet, as the matter is still under consideration.

Replying to a question in the Legislative Assembly tabled by MLA Budgam Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi, the government said that although the J&K National Law University Act, 2018, has already been enacted, the government is yet to notify the headquarters of the university.

Once the notification under the Act is issued, further steps for the establishment of the university will be taken accordingly, it said.

The government further informed that a committee headed by a senior official had examined various aspects related to the establishment of NLU, including infrastructure, faculty, admission process and financial requirements. "The committee has submitted its report, which is currently under examination before the government," it said.

On the status of Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) campus in Budgam, the government said that the university is actively pursuing the construction of a College of Teacher Education (CTE) building at its satellite campus in Srinagar.

Govt's response on NLU 'mockery of Assembly': Mehdi

NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIEE

Jammu, Apr 04: Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Budgam, Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi on Saturday termed the government's reply on the proposed National Law University (NLU) as a "mockery of the Assembly", saying commitments made on the floor of the House must be honoured.

Speaking to reporters outside the Assembly here, Mehdi said that on October 25, 2025, it was stated on the floor of the House that a National Law University would be established in Ompora area of Budgam.

"The government did not make this promise at a political rally or party meeting, but on the floor of the Assembly. In my view, this is not just a mockery of the people of Budgam, but of the Assembly itself," he said.

Commenting on the conduct witnessed in the House, particularly involving Minister Sakeena Itoo and PDP MLA Waheed Parra, Mehdi said he does not support the manner in which reputations are being targeted.

"I am absolutely not in favour of dragging reputations—whether it is the government targeting the opposition or vice versa. Given the challenging times and the fact that people of Kashmir have sent us here, our focus should be on addressing their issues," he said.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

It said that the project is being taken up with financial assistance under the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA) loan.

The government added that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) is under preparation and will be submitted to HEFA and the Ministry of Education

for approval.

However, it said that approval is still awaited from the Ministry of Education for the utilisation of the unspent balance of the sanctioned loan. "The response from the Ministry of Education is still awaited," the government said—(KNO)

DEMISE



Asmi family bereaved again

Pirzada Mohammad Muqem is no more
With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the sad demise of Pirzada Mohammad Muqem Asmi of Hilal Colony, Qamarwari, who passed away this morning, barely eight days after the passing of his beloved father.

He was the son of Late Ghulam Ahmad Mustafa Asmi, former Chief Engineer, who passed away on 27 March 2026.

he was laid to rest in the holy shrine of Hazrat Sheikh Ahmed Tarabali at Tarabal, Nawakadal.

His congregational Fateha Khwani will be held at 10:30 in the morning on Tuesday, April 7.

Mohammad Tahir Asmi (brother)

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public that the correct name of my daughter is SYEDA MUDEEBA BATOOL and the correct name of her father is SYED MUDASIR. However, owing to an inadvertent typographical error, the name of my daughter and the name of her father have been incorrectly recorded in the school records of R.P. School, Lawaypora, as under:

Name of Student: Syed Mudeeba Batool
Name of Father: Syed Mudasar Shah
Whereas, the correct entries are as follows:
Name of Student: SYEDA MUDEEBA BATOOL Name of Father: SYED MUDASIR

It is intended to rectify and update the aforesaid entries in the school records in accordance with the documentary evidence available. Therefore, if any person has any objection, claim, or grievance with regard to the proposed correction of the said entries, he/she may submit the same before the concerned school authorities within a period of 15 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which no objection, claim, or grievance shall be entertained thereafter.

Jan Vishwas (Amendment Of Provisions) Bill, 2026: Simplifying Laws, Strengthening Trust

Press Information Bureau

Introduction: A Journey from Mistrust to Confidence

For many years, several laws in India treated even small procedural mistakes as criminal offences. A missed filing deadline, a wrongly filled form, or a minor paperwork error could sometimes expose citizens and businesses to criminal penalties, including the possibility of imprisonment. Many of these provisions came from older regulatory systems. Recognising the need to make laws more balanced and practical, the Government began a process of reviewing such provisions. An important step in this direction was the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023, which removed criminal penalties for a number of minor offences across several Central laws.

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 continues this reform effort. It seeks to further reduce the criminalisation of minor violations and replace them with more proportionate civil penalties and administrative mechanisms.

Pillars of Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026

Built on four pillars, the bill aims to create a regulatory environment that encourages compliance while making everyday interactions with the law simpler.

Warning before Punishment: First-time and minor lapses are addressed through warnings rather than immediate penalties, providing citizens and businesses a fair opportunity to comply.

Proportionate Penalties: Penalties are calibrated to the severity of the offence, ensuring fair, balanced, and just enforcement.

Faster and Fair Resolution: Dedicated adjudicating officers and appellate authorities enable swift and transparent resolution, while reducing the burden on courts.

Dynamic Penalty Framework: Penalties are subject to periodic revision, ensuring that enforcement remains effective, relevant, and responsive over time.

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 reimagines the legal landscape by replacing rigid punishments with a more balanced and humane framework. It marks a decisive shift away from excessive criminalisation, converting hundreds of fines and imprisonment clauses into civil penalties and removing many altogether. By reducing jail terms and enabling compounding of offences, the Bill promotes compliance over punishment. It also trims the scope of offences and rationalises imprisonment provisions, ensuring that minor or procedural lapses no longer attract harsh consequences.

Together, these changes replace criminal sanctions for minor or procedural violations with more practical, citizen-friendly alternatives, reinforcing the objective of improving both ease of living and ease of doing business.

Legislative Journey: A Reform Anchored in Deliberation and Consensus

The reform initiative began with the enactment of the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023, which amended 42 Central Acts and decriminalised 183 provisions by replacing imprisonment with monetary penalties and other administrative enforcement mechanisms. This marked the first consolidated legislative effort to systematically remove criminal consequences for minor and procedural violations across multiple laws.

Building upon this initiative, the Government undertook a broader review of criminal provisions across Central legislation administered by different ministries and departments. As part of this next phase of reforms, the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 18 August 2025. The Bill proposed amendments in 16 Central Acts administered by 10 Ministries, covering 355 provisions.

Following its introduction, the Bill was referred to a Select Committee of Parliament for detailed examination. The Committee held 49 sittings and submitted its report to the Lok Sabha on 13 March 2026, recommending further refinements and expansion of the proposed reforms. The committee in addition to the

JAN VISHWAS
(Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026

Delivering
Ease of Living & Ease of Doing Business
for Every Citizen

- 317 provisions Fine converted into civil penalty
- 158 provisions Fine removed entirely
- 113 provisions Jail & fine converted into civil penalty
- 57 provisions Jail & fine removed
- 63 provisions Warning/notice for first-time default
- 17 provisions Jail term reduced
- 17 provisions Compounding of offences introduced
- 29 provisions Imprisonment removed
- 2 provisions Imprisonment converted into civil penalty
- 1 provision Nature of imprisonment rationalised
- 6 provisions Scope of offence limited

Criminal provisions replaced with
smarter, citizen-friendly alternatives

288 provisions, also examined and proposed amendments in additional 62 Acts for decriminalization.

Based on the recommendations and consultations with the concerned ministries and departments, the scope of the reforms was further expanded to promote ease of doing business and ease of living. The revised legislation, presented as the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, proposes amendments to 79 Central Acts administered by 23 Ministries, covering a total of 784 provisions, including 717 provisions proposed for decriminalisation and 67 provisions aimed at improving ease of living.

Citizen-Centric Reforms: Benefits for the Common Man

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 introduces several reforms that directly benefit ordinary citizens by ensuring that minor everyday lapses do not result in criminal prosecution.

For example, under the Railways Act, 1989, refusing to vacate a berth reserved for another passenger earlier attracted a criminal fine. This has now been converted into a civil penalty of up to 1,000, allowing such disputes to be handled administratively rather than through criminal proceedings.

Under the Court Fees Act, 1870, unauthorised sale of court fee stamps or non-compliance with any rules earlier attracted imprisonment of up to six months along with a fine. The reform replaces imprisonment with a monetary penalty for non-fraudulent actions.

In the healthcare sector, the Clinical Establishments Act, 2010 earlier allowed criminal prosecution of clinics for minor deficiencies that could be rectified easily. The reform replaces this with a civil penalty of up to 10,000, allowing healthcare providers to correct issues without facing criminal charges.

Under the Calcutta Metro Railway Act, 1985, a passenger caught smoking in a metro carriage or underground station earlier faced

criminal prosecution. The reform converts this offence into a civil penalty of 2,000, ensuring that a minor lapse in a public space does not result in a criminal case.

Through such reforms, the Bill ensures that routine or minor mistakes in everyday situations do not lead to criminal proceedings, making the legal framework simpler and fairer for ordinary citizens.

Ease of Living Provisions under Jan Vishwas Bill

In addition to reducing criminal provisions across several laws, the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 introduces a number of measures that simplify regulatory requirements and improve everyday interactions between citizens and public authorities.

Illegal Use of Public Water Now a Civil Penalty, not a Criminal Fine (NDMC Act, 1994 - Section 295)

Earlier, removing or using water from wells or tanks in violation of a prohibition attracted a criminal fine. The reform replaces this with a fixed civil penalty of 1,000, ensuring accountability for misuse of public water while doing away with criminal proceedings for minor municipal violations.

Driving Licence Valid for 30 Days After Expiry - No Immediate Penalty (Motor Vehicles Act, 1988)

Previously, even a one-day lapse in a licence rendered a driver technically non-compliant. The reform introduces a 30-day grace period during which the licence remains valid, shielding ordinary drivers from abrupt penalties and providing a reasonable window for renewal.

NDMC Property Tax Shift Removes Decades-Old Confusion (NDMC Act, 1994)

Residents in the NDMC area faced an inconsistent system where 5% of properties were still taxed under the outdated rateable-value method, while 95% followed the modern unit-area method. The reform standardises taxation by adopting the transparent Unit Area Method

across the board, ensuring fairness, predictability, and improved ease of living for all households.

Accident Victims Get More Time to Seek Compensation (Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 - Section 166)

Motor accident victims who are unable to meet the initial filing deadline can now approach the Claims Tribunal up to twelve months beyond the prescribed period, subject to showing sufficient cause. This reform acknowledges that families, often dealing with trauma, medical treatment, disability, or financial hardship, may not be able to act immediately, and ensures they do not forfeit their right to compensation due to delays.

Being Outdoors at Night No Longer a Crime of Suspicion (Delhi Police Act, 1978 - Section 102(c))

Earlier, merely being present in a house, building, or vehicle between sunset and sunrise without a "satisfactory explanation" could attract imprisonment of up to three months. This provision reflected a colonial-era, suspicion-based approach that treated ordinary movement as potentially criminal. The reform abolishes this offence altogether, aligning the law with modern principles. Under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and contemporary policing standards, greater emphasis is placed on liberty, intent, and evidence rather than vague notions of suspicion. As a result, citizens are no longer exposed to criminal liability simply for being present in public or private spaces at night.

Ticket Issues Become Administrative, Not Criminal (Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 - Section 178)

Earlier, travelling without a ticket or refusing to produce one could attract criminal fines of up to 500. The reform reclassifies these offences as civil violations, with penalties up to 500, decriminalising routine commuter lapses and enabling faster, more citizen-friendly enforcement.

Together, these reforms make regulatory systems simpler and

more practical for citizens, while ensuring that enforcement remains effective and proportionate.

Ease of Doing Business Provisions under Jan Vishwas Bill

In addition to making an impact on the daily life of the citizens, the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 also introduces several reforms to make compliance easier for businesses.

Replacing Criminal Penalties with Civil Penalties

The Bill replaces provisions of imprisonment with civil penalties to ensure that businesses are not exposed to criminal prosecution for minor compliance gaps.

For example, under the Central Silk Board Act, 1948, furnishing incorrect information or failing to produce records earlier carried the possibility of imprisonment. The amendment introduces a warning for the first contravention and monetary penalties for repeated violations. The provision also benefits MSMEs by giving small sericulture businesses an opportunity to correct procedural lapses.

Introducing Graded Enforcement Mechanisms

In many laws, the Bill introduces a graded approach to enforcement, allowing businesses to correct mistakes before facing penalties.

Under the Tea Act, 1953, failure to furnish returns or making false returns earlier attracted fines. The amended framework provides a warning for the first contravention and penalties only for subsequent violations.

Similarly, under the Copyright Act, 1957, making a false entry in the Register of Copyrights earlier carried the possibility of imprisonment of up to one year. The reform removes this provision, ensuring that authors, artists, and creators are not exposed to criminal liability for administrative or paperwork errors.

Simplifying Compliance for Export and Trade Sectors

Reforms have also been introduced in laws governing trade and exports to reduce compliance burdens on exporters.

Under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) Act, 1985, procedural offences such as failure to furnish returns will now follow a warning-and-penalty framework instead of immediate punitive action. This gives exporters time to correct genuine mistakes.

Removing Outdated or Redundant Provisions

Some provisions that had become outdated or imposed unnecessary compliance burdens have been removed altogether.

For instance, under the Coir Industry Act, 1953, exporting coir products without a licence under an obsolete regulatory framework earlier attracted fine. This provision has been removed, eliminating an outdated compliance requirement, further benefitting small coir MSME exporters.

Through these measures, the Bill seeks to create a regulatory environment that is more predictable, practical, and supportive of business activity, while ensuring that serious violations continue to attract appropriate penalties.

Benefits for MSMEs under Jan Vishwas Bill

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 introduces several reforms that reduce compliance burdens for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The Bill provides small businesses an opportunity to correct mistakes without facing immediate punitive action.

Under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, failure to maintain or produce required records earlier attracted immediate penalties. The amendment introduces an improvement notice for the first lapse, allowing MSME importers to rectify compliance gaps before penalties are imposed.

Under the Private Security Agencies Act, 2005, failure to display a licence at the business premises earlier attracted a criminal fine of up to 25,000. This provision has now been removed, recognising that such procedural lapses should not result in criminal liability for small security agencies.

Under the Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, publishers failing to deposit copies earlier faced fines. The reform introduces a warning mechanism, protecting small publishers from

Key Takeaways

- The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 proposes amendments in 79 Central Acts administered by 23 Ministries, covering 784 provisions across multiple sectors.
- It removes criminal penalties for minor procedural lapses and replaces them with civil penalties or administrative mechanisms.
- The Bill also introduces amendments aimed at improving ease of living, including reforms under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and the New Delhi Municipal Council Act, 1994.
- It reduces compliance burden for MSMEs and businesses by introducing graded enforcement such as advisory notices and warnings before penalties.

disproportionate penalties for procedural delays.

Under the MMDR Act, 1957 relating to Mines and Minerals: The contravening rules made under the Act earlier carried imprisonment of up to two years or a fine. The reform replaces imprisonment with a monetary penalty of up to 50 lakh, ensuring that small mining and mineral-based enterprises face proportionate financial consequences instead of criminal prosecution for procedural violations.

Through these measures, the Bill supports MSMEs by simplifying compliance requirements, reducing regulatory uncertainty, and encouraging voluntary compliance while ensuring that serious violations continue to attract appropriate penalties.

Key Legislative Changes: Important Acts Amended

Covering a wide range of sectors and regulatory areas, the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 proposes amendments across several Central laws with proportionate civil penalties, warnings, or administrative mechanisms.

Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, failure to disclose the place where certain drugs (Ayurvedic, Siddha and Unani Drugs) are manufactured or stored earlier carried imprisonment of up to six months along with a fine. The amendment replaces imprisonment with a higher monetary penalty.

Several provisions under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 have also been rationalised. Minor civic violations such as hawkling without a licence, obstruction of municipal authorities, or certain sanitation-related offences earlier attracted criminal fines. These have been converted into civil penalties, while some outdated provisions have been removed altogether.

Reforms have also been proposed under the Apprentices Act, 1961, where several offences related to procedural non-compliance are proposed to follow a three-stage enforcement mechanism advisory for the first contravention, warning for the second, and monetary penalties for repeated violations.

In addition, amendments have been proposed in laws such as the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act, 1985, the Road Transport Corporations Act, 1950, and the Coir Industry Act, 1953, where imprisonment or criminal fines for minor procedural lapses have been replaced with civil penalties or removed entirely.

Conclusion

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 continues the Government's effort to modernise India's regulatory framework. By removing criminal penalties and introducing graded enforcement mechanisms, the Bill makes laws more practical and proportionate.

These reforms reduce unnecessary compliance burdens for both citizens and businesses. At the same time, serious violations continue to attract appropriate penalties. The Bill therefore promotes a more balanced and trust-based regulatory system that supports both ease of living and ease of doing business.

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

Measures initiated to support farming activities across J&K: Javid Dar

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 04: Minister for Agriculture Production, Javid Ahmad Dar, Saturday informed the House that the government has already taken various measures to support the farming activities across Jammu and Kashmir during the current season.

This was stated by the Minister while responding to the concerns raised by MLA Ghulam Ahmad Mir during the zero hour in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister, as per an official statement, stated that the government has already asked all the stakeholder departments to ensure timely provision of fuel to farmers for carrying out their agriculture and horticulture activities. He emphasized that necessary



instructions have been conveyed to the concerned authorities so that farmers do not face any inconvenience during the ongoing agricultural operations.

The Minister assured that all

possible steps are being taken to facilitate smooth farming activities and ensure adequate supply of fuel required for the agricultural and horticultural purposes.

Comprehensive R&R plan formulated for Sawalkote Project: Javed Rana

KT News Desk

The Government has formulated a comprehensive Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) plan for the Sawalkote Hydroelectric Project, taking into account the extent of impact on the local communities.

This was stated by Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmad Rana, while replying to a question raised by MLA Pawan Kumar Gupta in the Legislative Assembly, on behalf of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah.

The Minister, as per an official statement, said that the rehabilitation plan included compensation measures for the landowners and a range of rehabilitation and resettlement entitlements in accordance with the standard practices for all affected districts. "Therefore it won't be prudent to say that Udhampur district is out of commensurate development

benefits," he said.

The Minister informed the House that the project components fall across three districts of Jammu and Kashmir, Ramban, Udhampur and Reasi, with Ramban district bearing the maximum submergence and emerging as the most affected district in the Union Territory.

The Minister further informed that out of the total land requirement of 1,401.35 hectares for the project, Ramban accounts for the largest share at 1,097.55 hectares, followed by Udhampur with 197 hectares and Reasi with 106.8 hectares.

With regard to submergence, it was informed that out of 1,158.75 hectares of total land, Ramban accounts for 1,030.55 ha (88.94%), Udhampur for 63 ha (5.44%) and Reasi for 65.2 ha, firmly establishing Ramban as the most affected district in

the Union Territory.

The Minister provided a detailed breakdown of project components across the three districts. He informed that the diversion tunnel, right abutment of the Dam and right bank tunnels fall under Reasi district, the adit of right bank tunnels, most of the submergence area and other construction facilities fall under Ramban district while the Powerhouse, main tunnel and left abutment of the Dam are located in Udhampur district.

On the question of road connectivity, the Minister noted that the road connecting Jammu city to Ramban is an all-weather road being maintained by NHAI while the road connecting Ramban to Zero Morh is constructed and maintained by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

Regarding the shortest and most logical

Pancheri-Lander-Galiote route, the Minister informed that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) has been prepared based on technically feasible and commercially viable site conditions and has been duly approved by the Central Electricity Authority, Union Ministry of Power, outlining all project features including access roads to various project components.

The Minister further noted that the proposed road from MH Morh to Chakka is a single-lane route with high maintenance costs and would not be suitable for transportation of heavy machinery and equipment required for construction of the project. He added that the selection of access roads depends on detailed engineering and economic considerations and any change at a later stage could result in construction delays and cost overruns.

Public role key to smooth water supply: Jal Shakti Minister

Appeals consumers to clear pending dues

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 04: Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmad Rana, Saturday informed the Legislative Assembly that the temporary one-day disconnection of water supply in parts of Handwara division was undertaken as part of departmental revenue realization drive aimed at improving the recovery and meeting the prescribed targets.

He was replying to a Calling Attention Motion moved by Legislator Sheikh Khurshid in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister, as per an official statement, stressed that timely payment of user charges is crucial for uninterrupted water supply, emphasizing that it is a shared responsibility between the public and authorities.

He informed that the disconnection was resorted to as a last measure after sustained efforts by the department, including door-to-door campaigns and mass awareness drives through local community platforms.

The Minister said that the disconnection affected certain



pockets of Magam, Neelipora and other habitations witnessing poor revenue realization. He added that the water supply was restored on March 30, 2026 and has remained normal and uninterrupted thereafter.

The Minister stated that a significant number of consumers continue to avail potable water supply but have not cleared outstanding dues despite regular billing and repeated reminders.

FIRs lodged in PHE equipment theft cases: Javed Rana

Dept promoting community participation through Village Water, Sanitation Committees

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 04: Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmad Rana, Saturday informed the Legislative Assembly that prompt action has been taken and FIRs have been lodged with the concerned authorities in cases involving theft of transformers and allied Public Health Engineering (PHE) equipment.

The Minister, as per an official statement, was replying to a Calling Attention Notice moved by Legislator Devyani Rana.

Reiterating the government's commitment, the Minister said that all necessary measures are being taken to safeguard the public assets and prevent such incidents.

The Minister said that the Jal Shakti (PHE) Department is undertaking extensive water supply infrastructure development under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), with 3,253 schemes either under execution or already completed across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. He added that a substantial



inventory of pre-existing water supply infrastructure is also operational.

He further stated that given the wide spread and scale of these assets, their safeguarding is being ensured through regular monitoring and deployment of available manpower.

The Minister informed the House that the majority of the schemes are still under execution and remain in the custody

of executing agencies until their physical and financial completion, making them responsible for safeguarding the infrastructure during this period.

He also highlighted that the Department is promoting community participation through Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs/Paan Samitis) to foster a sense of ownership at the grassroots level.

17 lakh released for renovation of MMCH Zakoora: Sakeena Itoo

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 04: The government has released Rs 17 lakh for repair and renovation of Mini Maternity-cum-Child Care Hospital (MMCH), Zakoora to further enhance patient care in the region.

This was stated by Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, while replying to a Calling Attention Notice moved in the House Saturday by Legislator Salman Sagar.

She, as per an official statement, informed that during 2023-24, Director Health Services, Kashmir authorized the work namely 'up-gradation of MMCH Zakura Srinagar' in order to complete the remaining works including the internal finishing and other allied development works and granted AAA in July 2022 to the tune of Rs. 299.98 lakh. "Subsequently, the funds to the tune of Rs. 75.00 lakh were released but could not be utilized due to non-relocation/occupation of the building by the security forces", she added.

The Minister said that the works on MMCH Zakoora were under execution through J&K Housing Board but remained



incomplete due to occupation of the building by the security forces during the year 2019. She further said that during the year 2025, the security forces vacated the building and subsequently the building required repairs and renovation.

She informed that the project "HMESS2526100050-BALANCE WORK AT MMC ZAKURA SRINAGAR" has been approved under the UT Capex Budget 2025-26 with Rs. 17 lakh has been released. The PWD (R&B) was asked to prepare a DPR, which initially estimated costs at Rs. 10 crore, deemed high.

She added that a revised DPR has been requested with due cost effectiveness with PWD and accordingly the repair and renovation of the building shall be taken up at the earliest to make the building operational for hospital purposes.

SED focusing on strengthening existing infrastructure, staff availability: Sakeena Itoo

KT News Desk

Minister for Education Sakeena Itoo on Saturday stated that the School Education department (SED) is presently focusing on strengthening the existing infrastructure and ensuring adequate availability of teaching staff in the upgraded schools across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister stated this while replying to a question raised by Legislator Rafiq Ahmad Naik in Legislative Assembly Saturday regarding upgradation of schools.

She, as per an official statement, informed that a feasibility report has been submitted by the Chief Education Officer to the Directorate of School Education, Kashmir for up-gradation of High School Jawahirpora Lam to the level of Higher Secondary level.

She mentioned that High School Jawahirpora Lam's nearest Higher Secondary School is Higher Secondary School Satoora, about 6 km away.

The Minister said that the area has some population belonging to tribal communities but the up-gradation of schools is subject to the fulfilment of laid down criteria and feasibility norms like distance, feeding schools and top-class enrolment, which are prerequisites.

She added that at present there is no proposal under consideration for up-gradation of schools to the next higher level, as the department is prioritizing consolidation of infrastructure and provision of teaching faculty in already upgraded schools.

The Minister added that High School Jawahirpora Lam and High School Midoora will be considered for up-gradation as proposals come up.

Strategy in place to mitigate porcupine threat to saffron fields: Javed Rana

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 04: The Government Saturday informed the Legislative Assembly that a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy is being implemented to address porcupine-induced damage to saffron crops in Pampore and adjoining areas, with field evidence confirming active presence of the species in the region.

This information, as per an official statement, was given by Minister for Forest, Ecology and Environment, Javed Ahmad Rana, while replying to a Calling Attention Notice moved by Legislator Justice (Retd) Hasnain Masoodi.

The Minister said that habitat conditions such as caves, crevices, hilly terrain and overgrown private lands provide favorable shelter for porcupines near saffron-growing areas.

To mitigate the issue, the Government has proposed a series of measures, including clearance of caves, bushes and undergrowth in coordination with the Revenue Department and Panchayati Raj Institutions. He added that these measures include installation of deep-set mesh barriers (up to 1.5 metres underground) around vulnerable fields; protection of orchard trees using aluminum wrapping and reflective coatings; plantation of naturally repellent species such as iris,

wormwood and wild yam; use of organic repellents and olfactory deterrents like naphthalene; and deployment of motion-activated lighting and sound systems.

The Minister further informed that the Agriculture Department in collaboration with the Saffron Research Station, Dusoo, Pampore, is documenting the extent of damage to develop long-term scientific management strategies.

He added that a dedicated Man-Animal Conflict Control Room has been established at Khrew, along with regular night patrolling, installation of capture cages for live trapping and awareness campaigns for farmers.

Addressing concerns regarding monkey intrusion in agricultural fields at Wahab Sahib, Pampore, the Minister said that while monkeys are currently not listed under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, awareness initiatives are being undertaken and firecrackers are also being distributed to farmers as a deterrent.

He added that a coordinated, time-bound action plan involving the Agriculture, Revenue and Wildlife Departments, along with local communities, is being formulated to address the issue through field protection, habitat management and long-term population control.

Marh Sports Infra: Satish Sharma elaborates upgradation Plans

KT News Desk

Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma, Saturday said that the department has taken up several sports related schemes and initiatives for promotion of sports infrastructure in Marh Constituency.

He was replying to a question raised by Legislator Arvind Gupta on behalf of Surinder Kumar in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister, as per an official statement, said that in Marh constituency, the department has undertaken renovation of playfield Marh for Rs. 1 crore and presently the work is in progress with 50 percent completion. He further said that the work on construction of synthetic volleyball court at High School Suriyachak with an allotted cost of Rs. 15.50 Lakh and development of playfield at Sant Hare Ram Dass Public School Phallian Mandal with an estimated cost of Rs. 31.65 Lakh has also been completed.

The Minister further said that the government degree college Marh has been allotted 51 Kanal and 11 Marla of land at village Dhateryal Marh, where construction of the college building is presently in progress. "As the college is currently functioning in pre-fabricated structures, sports infrastructure such as



indoor sports hall, gymnasiums and athletic track will be taken up after completion of the first phase of completion of the college building", he added.

"About 9233 activities related to coaching camps, talent hunt initiatives, scholarships and other activities have been taken up in Jammu district. Besides, 143 sports activities including tournaments of different sports have been conducted in the district from November 2024 to February 2026", informed the Minister.

The Minister also informed about several sports related schemes and initiatives for development of sports infrastructure, organizing district and state level tournaments, providing sports uniform to the students and supporting training programs for young athletes are also

been undertaken in the constituency.

The Minister said that awareness and participation programs are also being conducted in school and villages in Marh constituency. He said the constituency is also being benefited from J&K Sport Policy 2022 which emphasizes talent identification, mass participation, structured coaching and incentives for sports persons. "Regular coaching camps, training programmes and sports competitions are being organized in collaboration with the recognized sports association, enabling youth to participate in the district, UT and national level events. These sustained efforts have significantly enhanced Youth engagement, encouraged a sports culture and provided a strong platform for the aspiring athletes in the constituency", he added.

Land compensation determined as per Land Act 2013: Javed Rana

KT News Desk

The compensation for proprietary acquired land is determined strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 and the National Highways Authority Act, 1956.

This was stated by Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology and Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmad Rana, while replying to a question raised by MLA Shabir Ahmad Kullay. He was replying on behalf of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah in the House Saturday.

The Minister, as per an official statement, informed the House that discrepancies have been observed in certain cases between the actual use of land as orchards and the classification recorded in revenue records in the Kashmir Division. It stated that, as per inputs from the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, such variations generally arise in cases where the land use has been changed over time from agriculture to horticulture by the land owners themselves without following the prescribed procedure under law.

The government further said that revenue records are updated regularly during Rabi and Kharif harvest inspections, in accordance with the Standing Order No. 22 (Jamabandi) and Standing Order No. 23-B.

On the issue of additional compensation or relief, the government reiterated that the matter is governed by the existing legal framework and no separate provision is envisaged.

Justice Sanjeev Kumar inaugurates Legal Literacy Club at Kathua School Highlights need for legal literacy at grassroots level



KT News Desk

Kathua, Apr 04: A Legal Literacy Club was on Saturday inaugurated at Jammu Sanskriti School, Kathua, with the objective of promoting legal awareness and sensitizing students to their rights and duties as responsible citizens. Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and Principal District & Sessions Judge, Kathua, Jatinder Singh Jamwal; Secretary, DLSA Kathua, Urvashi R. Bhargava; Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Rajesh Sharma; President, Kathua Bar Association; Chief Legal Aid Defense Counsel (LADC); besides Chairman of Jammu Sanskriti

grassroots level. He also stressed upon the importance of fundamental duties enshrined in the Constitution and urged everyone to diligently perform their duties alongside being aware of their rights. Among others present on the occasion were Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority, Shazia Tabassum; Chairman, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and Principal District & Sessions Judge, Kathua, Jatinder Singh Jamwal; Secretary, DLSA Kathua, Urvashi R. Bhargava; Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Rajesh Sharma; President, Kathua Bar Association; Chief Legal Aid Defense Counsel (LADC); besides Chairman of Jammu Sanskriti

School, faculty members and students. Chairman, DLSA Kathua, Jatinder Singh Jamwal also addressed the gathering and encouraged students to develop a keen understanding of legal processes and societal responsibilities. He said the District Legal Services Authority would remain committed to imparting theoretical knowledge and practical insights, thereby equipping students with a comprehensive understanding of law. During the programme, students presented a variety of cultural items reflecting their enthusiasm and creativity. A Nukkad Natak titled "Kanoon Par Hai Sabka Adhikar" was also presented, highlighting the

importance of legal awareness and the role of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) in ensuring access to justice for all. The speakers underscored the significance of legal awareness in empowering citizens and encouraged students to actively participate in the activities of the Legal Literacy Club and act as ambassadors of legal awareness in society. The establishment of the Legal Literacy Club marks a significant step towards strengthening legal outreach and education at the school level, in line with the mandate of the Legal Services Authorities. The programme concluded with a formal vote of thanks presented by the Vice Principal of Jammu Sanskriti School.

Modi to launch BJP's Bengal campaign from Cooch Behar on April 5

PTI

Kolkata, Apr 04: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to visit Cooch Behar district on Sunday to launch the BJP's campaign for the West Bengal assembly elections, a senior party leader said.

Modi is scheduled to address the BJP's 'Bijoy Sankalpa Sabha' at the historic Ras Mela grounds in the afternoon, marking the start of the party's intensified outreach in north Bengal, with the aim of consolidating grassroots support in a region that has become a saffron stronghold over the years and a critical electoral battlefield.

During the rally, the PM is expected to outline the party's vision for a "developed West Bengal", highlight issues raised in the BJP's recently released 'People's Chargesheet' against the ruling TMC in the state, and focus on governance, law and order, and alleged corruption.

This will be Modi's first election rally in the state, following the declaration of assembly polls, and the fourth public meeting at the Ras Mela grounds, after his previous rallies at the same venue during his campaign for the 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections and the 2021 assembly polls.

Elections to the 294-member West Bengal assembly will be held in two phases - on April 23 and April 29. Votes will be counted on May 4. The BJP leader said Modi's



address is likely to set the tone for the party's campaign narrative, emphasising a "fear-free" environment and restoration of public trust in institutions. "The Prime Minister's visit is centred on transitioning West Bengal from an era of systemic 'bhoj' (fear) to a future of 'bhorosa' (trust). This rally serves as a definitive launchpad to replace the 'chronicle of betrayal' with a commitment to security and growth," a BJP statement said.

While "dismantling the rule of fear" will be articulated in the PM's vision for a fear-free state, the "pledge for trust" will be reinforced in "Modi's guarantee to end syndicate raj and cut-money culture", it said.

"Beyond political victory, the Bijoy Sankalpa Sabha seeks to restore the cultural glory of Kavigurur Rabinranath Tagore's West Bengal, pledging an end to state-sponsored lawlessness," the statement said.

The April 5 rally will be followed by a series of public meetings, roadshows, and organisational programmes by senior BJP leaders across the state ahead of the polls, another party leader said, emphasising its plans for the final push for a decisive mandate in Bengal.

Modi had last visited the state on March 14 to address a rally at Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata, and inaugurate development projects worth around Rs 18,680 crore, marking the culmination of the party's 'Poriborton Yatra'.

BJP's added focus in north Bengal bore fruit in the 2021 assembly elections, when the party won 30 of the 54 seats in the region, with Cooch Behar contributing seven of the nine seats from the district. The TMC wrested the Dinhatra segment later in a bypoll, after BJP's Nisith Pramanik moved to Delhi to take charge as junior Union minister.

The saffron party lost the Cooch Behar Lok Sabha segment in 2024, but won six of the eight Parliamentary seats in north Bengal that year.

According to observers, BJP's renewed political focus on Cooch Behar has been propelled by keeping in forefront development schemes like the Rs 1,010-crore city gas distribution project covering the district and adjacent Alipurduar, whose foundation stone was laid by Modi last year.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Character of warfare

security challenges. General Chauhan exhorted all ranks to maintain operational excellence, embrace jointness as a way of life and remain prepared to dominate the full spectrum of future conflict. He also interacted with representatives of Civil Administration, eminent personalities and functionaries in Baramulla and reviewed the efforts towards Nation Building. (KNO)

J&K Assembly's budget

and Eid break. The second leg resumed on March 27, when the House approved the budget.

Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather informed that the House held 22 sittings, functioning for a total of 110 hours and six minutes. Eight government bills were introduced and all were passed.

Regarding Private Members' business, 39 bills were received; of the 72 listed, 24 were taken up and two were introduced.

On questions, the Secretariat received 1,528 in total- 802 starred and 726 unstarred. Of these, 1,379 were listed, 151 were taken up, 144 disallowed, two withdrawn and three not listed. In addition, 331 supplementary queries were raised. The Assembly also received 110 calling attention notices, of which 63 were disallowed and 47 admitted; 26 were listed and all were taken up.

As many as 128 resolutions were received. Of which 101 were admitted and 27 disallowed. Fourteen were listed, four were taken up, but none adopted. A total of 2,231 cut motions were received, of which 2,059 were allowed and 172 disallowed.

The Speaker thanked members for their participation and ministers for their dedication. He appreciated the Chief Minister for his involvement and acknowledged the role of the Chief Secretary, administrative secretaries, media including radio, Doordarshan, electronic and print, as well as the Home Department, police and Assembly staff for ensuring the smooth conduct of proceedings. (KNO)

Speaker hails efforts

coordinated efforts in ensuring the smooth and efficient conduct of Budget Session 2026 of Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker also lauded the contributions of other allied departments, including the Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Police, Health, Transport, Power, Hospitality and Protocol and other supporting agencies for maintaining seamless arrangements throughout the session period. He noted that their collective efforts ensured orderly proceedings, security management, logistical support, and uninterrupted services for legislators, officials, media personnel, and visitors.

Pertinent to mention, DIPR had established a dedicated Press Room in J&K Legislative Assembly Complex with dedicated teams for the facilitation of media persons, proper coverage and timely dissemination of proceedings of House to the media. The department also played an effective role in media coordination and smooth Public Address System during the entire Budget Session 2026.

Rather hailed

Speaker's experience and leadership, noting that despite the usual challenges and differing viewpoints, the proceedings were conducted in an orderly and effective manner.

He said that all the legislators, particularly first time MLAs benefitted greatly from the Speaker's guidance and had the opportunity to learn the nuances of legislative functioning.

Sharing his experience, the Deputy Chief

Minister said that this session served as a valuable platform for meaningful discussions and constructive debate, contributing significantly towards strengthening democratic processes.

He also expressed appreciation for the dedicated efforts of the Assembly staff, officers and officials, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure seamless functioning of the session. He emphasized that the quality of debates and discussions in the House is a result of their continuous hard work and commitment.

The Deputy Chief Minister further acknowledged the role of the media in taking the voice of the Assembly to the people. He appreciated the press for highlighting public issues and strengthening the democratic engagement.

He also expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister and Members of the House for collectively ensuring that the concerns of the people are effectively raised and addressed.

On the concluding day, the Members cutting across party lines, also expressed their sincere gratitude to the Speaker, for smooth, efficient and impartial conduct of the Budget Session-2026.

Legislators Surjeet Singh Slathia, M.Y. Tarigami, Nizam-ud-Din Bhat, Sajad Gani Lone, Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah, Tanvir Sadiq, Mir Saifullah, Rafiq Ahmad Naik, Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurezi), Sajjad Shaheen, Aijaz Ahmad Jan and Salman Sagar spoke in the appreciation of Speaker.

The Members collectively lauded the Speaker for conducting the proceedings with remarkable efficiency, ensuring that the House functioned smoothly without disruptions.

They highlighted that for the first time, the Members were given adequate and extended opportunities to raise issues related to their constituencies.

The Speaker's commitment towards maintaining decorum, ensuring equal participation and allocating fair time to all members was widely appreciated.

The Members noted that this inclusive approach strengthened the democratic functioning and allowed diverse voices to be heard effectively.

The House acknowledged that the Budget Session-2026 set a positive benchmark in terms of discipline, productivity and member participation.

House passes

Balwant Singh Mankotia, Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah and Tanvir Sadiq withdrew their amendments following assurances from the Minister.

Chill returns to

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department said erratic weather conditions are likely to continue across Jammu and Kashmir till April 10, with intermittent spells of rain and snow forecast in the coming days.

According to the MeT office on April 5 and 6, the region is expected to witness partly cloudy conditions with light rain at isolated locations. A fresh spell of light to moderate rain and snowfall in higher reaches, along with thunder and gusty winds, is likely at many places on April 7 and 8.

Between April 9 and 11, brief spells of light rain and snowfall in higher reaches are expected at scattered places, while the weather is likely to remain generally dry from April 12 to 15.

The MeT office has issued an advisory warning of thunder, hailstorms and gusty winds reaching speeds of 40-50 kmph at a few places on April 4 and April 7-8.

It said intense showers for short durations may trigger flash floods, landslides and waterlogging in vulnerable and low-lying areas.

Farmers have been advised to suspend farm operations, while travellers have been asked to plan their movement accordingly.

RAIN, LANDSLIDES DISRUPT TRAFFIC, MULTIPLE ROADS SHUT IN J&K

Meanwhile, multiple roads across Jammu and Kashmir remained closed or witnessed disruptions on Saturday following fresh rainfall, snowfall and landslides, while the Traffic Police issued an advisory urging commuters to avoid unnecessary travel and check road status before undertaking journeys.

Officials said movement on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway (NH-44) remained slow over the past 24 hours due to landslides between Nashri tunnel and Banihal, and single-lane traffic between Marog and Kishtwari Pather. The situation was further affected by the breakdown of three heavy motor vehicles.

In view of the forecast of continued rain and snowfall over the next few days, authorities advised commuters to travel only after confirming road conditions from traffic control units in Jammu, Srinagar and Ramban. Night travel on the highway has been discouraged due to the risk of shooting stones, landslides and ongoing construction works along the Ramban-Banihal stretch.

Traffic officials said that subject to weather conditions, light motor vehicles and passenger vehicles would be allowed to ply on NH-44 from both sides. However, no heavy motor vehicles carrying goods will be permitted from Qazigund towards Jammu between midnight and 6 am due to a religious congregation at Vijaypur. Security forces' convoys will be regulated separately.

The Kishtwar-Sinthan-Anantnag road remained closed for vehicular movement as per existing orders, while the Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri (SSG) road will remain open only for regulated traffic, subject to clearance from road maintenance agencies due to avalanche risk along the Zojila axis.

Authorities said vehicles will be allowed from Srinagar towards Kargil with a cut-off timing in place, and motorists have been advised to carry anti-skid chains.

The Mughal Road will remain open for light motor vehicles from both sides for limited hours between late morning and afternoon, subject to weather conditions.

Meanwhile, the Bandipora-Gurez road continued to remain closed due to fresh snowfall.

In Reasi district, heavy rainfall triggered landslides, blocking key roads in Mahore and Arnas areas and leaving hundreds of people stranded. Officials said restoration work is underway, but continuous rain is hampering clearance operations.

Authorities have advised people to follow lane discipline and avoid overtaking to prevent congestion on highways. (KNO)

Over 2,100 waste

into recyclable and non-recyclable materials. Recyclable plastic is sent to Plastic Waste Management Units (PWWUs) for processing before being forwarded to authorised recyclers.

It added that in case of littering or public inconvenience, immediate measures are taken to clear the sites.

Regarding construction of individual compost and soakage pits, the government said that the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) guidelines do not provide for construction of individual compost pits and soakage pits.

On defunct assets, the government said that non-functional waste segregation sheds are being repaired and renovated to make them operational, while Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode is also being explored to improve functionality.

"The Finance Department has earmarked 10

per cent of PRI grants for operation and maintenance of SBM(C) assets, which will help in upkeep of such infrastructure," the government said. (KNO)

Mega medical camp

and ensuring early diagnosis and timely treatment, particularly for those who face difficulties in accessing specialised care due to distance and financial constraints.

Locals appreciated the effort, stating that such camps not only reduce the burden of travel but also make quality healthcare accessible within their villages.

"We usually have to travel long distances for specialist doctors, which is not always possible. This camp has really helped people like us," said Mohd Shafi, a resident of Neegu.

Another local from Brenwar Chadoora said, "Such medical camps are a big relief for rural populations. We received proper check-ups and guidance without any hassle. The government should organise more such programmes regularly."

Health authorities reiterated their commitment to continue organising similar outreach programmes in rural areas to ensure accessible and equitable healthcare services for all sections of society. (KNO)

J&K Private

a voice vote, and subsequently it was passed. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah described the passage of J&K Private Universities Bill as a milestone moment for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir. He congratulated Minister for Education, Sakeena Itoo, and all stakeholders.

"The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly has passed the Private Universities Bill today, marking a significant step towards shaping a brighter future for our youth," the Chief Minister said.

The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly passed the Jammu and Kashmir Private Universities Bill, 2026 (L.A. Bill No. 08 of 2026).

Highlighting the broader vision behind the legislation, Omar Abdullah said the Bill will open new avenues for quality higher education within the Union Territory, significantly reduce the need for students to move outside for studies, and attract reputed institutions to establish campuses in J&K.

He emphasised that the move reflects the government's commitment to strengthening academic infrastructure, fostering innovation, and creating a vibrant ecosystem for learning and research.

He said the passage of the Bill marks a decisive step towards positioning Jammu and Kashmir as an emerging hub of higher education and academic excellence.

Earlier, on the concluding day of the Budget Session, the Bill was moved for consideration and passing by Minister for Education, Sakeena Itoo.

The Speaker later put the Bill to voice vote, following which it was passed by the House.

J&K Govt unveils

been referred to the J&K Public Service Commission and 1,025 non-gazetted posts to the J&K Services Selection Board. Additionally, 802 non-gazetted posts in the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir and 608 in Jammu are under consideration and will be referred shortly, subject to financial concurrence.

The government has also filled a majority of vacant positions in Government Medical Colleges on a temporary basis under academic arrangements as per S.O 364 of 2020 to ensure continuity in patient care and academic activities.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF ALL GMCs, ASSOCIATED HOSPITALS HELD

On infrastructure, Itoo said that a comprehensive review of all Government Medical Colleges (GMCs) and associated hospitals has been conducted. While several institutions meet existing academic and clinical standards, newly established colleges face deficiencies in areas such as hostel accommodation, laboratories, diagnostic facilities, and specialized equipment.

She said that these gaps are being addressed through centrally sponsored schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) and the National Health Mission, along with UT-funded projects. Construction of additional teaching blocks, expansion of hospital infrastructure, and procurement of modern medical equipment are already underway, with strict timelines set for completion.

Major infrastructure projects include the development of academic and patient care blocks at Government Medical Colleges in Srinagar, Rajouri, Baramulla, and Kathua, as well as critical care and laboratory blocks at SKIMS Bemia. Equipment upgrades are also in progress, with GMC Srinagar alone adding medical equipment worth around Rs 10 crore annually, while other institutions are acquiring advanced diagnostic tools such as CT scans and high-end ultrasonography systems.

The Minister further said that patient-centric reforms, including triage systems, online registration, improved sanitation, and expansion of telemedicine and dialysis services, are being implemented to enhance healthcare delivery.

The Directorate of AYUSH is also upgrading its facilities under the National AYUSH Mission by converting dispensaries into Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and establishing integrated AYUSH hospitals, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Looking ahead, the government plans to introduce advanced healthcare services across the UT. These include robotic surgery facilities at GMC Srinagar and GMC Jammu, establishment of dental units in all GMCs in a phased manner, and setting up of new cath labs at GMC Baramulla and GMC Doda to strengthen cardiac care.

Additionally, PET scan facilities are proposed to be extended to all remaining GMCs by 2026-27, while dialysis services will be expanded to all Sub-District Hospitals (SDHs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs). The government also plans to deploy 50 AI-enabled X-ray machines across district and sub-district hospitals to improve diagnostic efficiency.

Infrastructure upgrades such as restoration of lifts, oxygen plants, toilets, and ramps are also being undertaken to enhance patient safety and accessibility. Under the PM-ABHM scheme, 13 critical care blocks, 111 Block Public Health Units, and 10 District Public Health Laboratories are set to be completed this year.

The Minister said that research initiatives focusing on cancer prevalence in horticulture-intensive areas will be undertaken through SKIMS Soura and GMC Jammu to support targeted interventions. Efforts are also being made to strengthen the nursing workforce by expanding manpower in nursing colleges across the UT.

Reaffirming the government's commitment, Itoo said that sustained interventions under central and UT funding mechanisms will ensure that all medical colleges and healthcare institutions in Jammu and Kashmir are brought at par with national standards, ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare for all. (KNO)

'Provocative' statements by Cong about West Asia risking lives of Indians there: PM Modi

PTI

Thiruvalla (Kerala), Apr 4: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday accused the Congress of making "provocative" statements aimed at straining India's relations with West Asian nations to politically harm him and thereby, gain political mileage.

Strongly lashing out at the Congress and its allies, Modi said that they were only concerned with winning the elections.

"I want to say this clearly, elections will come and go, but the safety of Indians, especially those from Kerala in the Middle East, is my top priority, and I will ensure it," the PM said at an NDA rally here.

Modi said that besides the lakhs of people from Kerala working and living in the Gulf nations, there are fishermen from Goa, Tamil Nadu and other states who are stranded in Iran and parts of Middle East due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia. "We are trying to bring



them back safely. But, the Congress does not care about this. Congress is making statements that risk straining India's relations with West Asian countries, creating unnecessary panic. This is being done only for political attacks on me.

"The only thing they care about is politics and power. The Congress does not care

about the people of India. The Congress has betrayed the trust of the people of Kerala. They should apologise to them and the nation," Modi said.

His strong-worded attack on the Congress on the West Asia issue comes days after Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi called him a coward and accused him of

bowing before the US and Israel to protect himself.

She had also alleged that Modi's policies have not provided safety and security to Indians stranded in the Gulf region during the conflict there.

In his speech at the rally, the PM claimed that the West Asia conflict had "exposed the mindset of Congress and its allies".

He said that he told the Congress leaders several times that it is not the time to make such "careless statements" as the safety of millions of Indian brothers and sisters living in the Gulf region was India's responsibility.

"Lakhs of Kerala residents work in the region, yet irresponsible statements by Congress leaders put their safety at risk. I urge Congress leaders to refrain from making remarks that could endanger Indians living in the Middle East. "It is our government's strong ties with Gulf countries that are helping protect our people in these difficult times," he contended.

India's pharma exports cross USD 28 bn till Feb

PTI

Hyderabad, Apr 4: India's pharmaceutical exports stood at over USD 28 billion up to February in the last financial year, registering a growth of more than 5 per cent compared to the same period last year, a top official said on Saturday.

K Raja Bhanu, Director General of the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil), said the sector, currently valued at around USD 60 billion, is projected to grow to USD 130 billion by 2030.

"Despite global challenges, pharmaceutical exports have been among the few sectors to maintain growth momentum. Exports during April-February FY26 stood at USD 28.29 billion, reflecting a growth of 5.6 per cent compared to the same period in FY25, led by formulations, biologicals, vaccines and AYUSH products," he said, addressing the inaugural session of the 'Chintan Shivir: Scaling Up Pharma Exports'. Rajesh Agrawal, Secretary in the Department of Commerce, said that irrespective of whether targets are met in dollar terms, exports would show growth in rupee terms as the Indian currency continues to weaken against the US dollar.

"The target we have set appears difficult to meet, but we will remain on a positive trajectory," Agrawal said.

Strait of Hormuz disruption

Govt urges no panic buying, says fuel supplies adequate

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 4: The government on Saturday urged citizens to avoid panic buying of petrol, diesel and LPG, saying fuel supplies remain adequate despite disruptions linked to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said the government is taking proactive steps to ensure the uninterrupted availability of petroleum products and cooking gas, while advising people to rely only on official information and conserve energy.

The government has prioritised domestic LPG and piped natural gas (PNG) supplies, particularly for households, hospitals and essential services, and has implemented measures to boost refinery output and manage demand, including extending LPG refill intervals.

Authorities have also stepped up enforcement against hoarding and black marketing, conducting more than 3,700 raids and issuing around 1,000 show-cause notices to LPG distributors, with 27 dealerships suspended so far.

Despite supply pressures from the geopolitical situation, there are no reports of LPG shortages at distributor points, the

ministry said in a statement, adding that about 51 lakh cylinders were delivered on Friday and online bookings accounted for 95 per cent of the total demand.

Commercial LPG supplies have been capped at 70 per cent of pre-crisis levels, while alternative fuels, such as kerosene and coal, are being deployed to ease demand.

On natural gas, the government said it is ensuring full supplies to households and transport sectors, while industrial and fertiliser sector allocations are being gradually increased, supported by incoming LNG cargoes.

All refineries are operating at high capacity with adequate crude inventories, and petrol pumps across the country remain fully stocked, the ministry said.

To shield consumers from rising global oil prices, the government has cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by 10 rupees per litre and imposed export levies on diesel and aviation fuel to boost domestic availability.

The ministry said state governments have been asked to intensify monitoring, counter misinformation and ensure smooth distribution of fuels, reiterating that India's overall energy supplies remain secured.

India has emerged solidly from multiple global shocks: Jaishankar

● Hails decisive leadership

PTI

Raipur, Apr 4: India has emerged solidly as a resilient global power, successfully navigating a series of external shocks that have tested the nation's economic and diplomatic strength, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar asserted on Saturday, in an apparent reference to the ongoing West Asia conflict.

Addressing the 15th convocation ceremony of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Raipur, Jaishankar identified the triple challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing global conflicts, and climate change as the disruptions of the decade, asserting that India has emerged solidly from these shocks.

He said that these three factors have impacted daily lives to an "unimaginable degree." While the pandemic transformed global work and life, the minister said that current conflicts have deeply impacted even distant societies, a testimony to the depth of globalisation.

He noted that India's ability to manage domestic and international challenges has solidified its position among the world's top five economies.

"We are now among the top five economies. No one can dispute that multiple global shocks have recently tested our resilience, and India has come through that solidly," he said, adding, "We have managed both domestic and external challenges fairly successfully."

More inclusive growth, representative politics and decisive leadership have created a new foundation from which the country can now harbour higher aspirations, he said.

"We have not only embraced the digital revolution enthusiastically, but actually purposefully applied it through our lives. Even many developed societies have not done so," the EAM said.

Jaishankar stressed that there is no getting away from building robust national capabilities, which he noted is the most effective way to de-risk and develop leverage.

"Building national capabilities has become more critical in the light of the global trends that I have mentioned. This is particularly so for large nations. You would note that even in the developed world, the earlier mantras of globalisation have



now given way to a new awareness about self-reliance," he pointed out.

In India, this is expressed as 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', the value of which is obvious when it comes to food, health, energy security or national security, he said.

"We must endeavour to secure within our control as many capacities as we can. Obviously, some domains will be more difficult than others. In such cases, the answers lie in reliable or trusted partnerships and diverse sourcing. Building robust national capabilities is the most effective way of de-risking and indeed even developing leverage," Jaishankar said.

The global order is changing with visible shifts in relative power and influence of countries, and the turbulence in the world is currently structural in many ways, he opined.

"The politics of some societies find it difficult to come to terms with these changes. New developments in technology, energy, military capabilities, connectivity, and resources have encouraged risk-taking in an increasingly competitive environment. Everything today is being leveraged, if not actually weaponised," he said.

The world is then confronted with the prospect of securing itself in an increasingly volatile and unpredictable environment, which has necessitated a larger inclination to hedge, to de-risk, and to diversify, whether it is a business choice or a foreign policy one, the external affairs minister said.

Asserting that nation-building is an extremely complex task with many dimensions, he highlighted the role of business and enterprise.

"A cross-cutting aspect is the strength and dynamism of our businesses. You will note that

in our endeavour to catch up for the lost decades of the past, a crucial initiative is now making it easier to do business. Even that is possible when the enabling environment is more positive," he said.

There has been significant improvements in ease of living and access to opportunities, particularly for entrepreneurs, startups and small businesses, while the expansion of educational institutions and increased focus on skill development have further strengthened India's human capital, he added.

Referring to the triple challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing global conflicts, and climate change as the disruptions of the decade, he said the growing frequency of extreme climate events and the steady erosion of natural habitats pose both short-term and long-term concerns.

Jaishankar said the graduating class at the event must count itself as fortunate because it is destined to achieve the goal of 'Viksit Bharat'.

"You are the beneficiaries of a solid decade of progress. You have gained from access to technology and to information that would have been inconceivable barely a generation ago. Today, India is poised to leapfrog in its journey of development, and your cohort will be amongst those that will lead this effort," he said.

Outlining the evolving role of India's foreign policy, Jaishankar said it is increasingly focused on expanding market access for Indian producers, securing critical resources and technologies, and supporting Indian citizens abroad, especially during times of crisis.

It promotes "Brand India" globally, essential to the perception of the country as a reliable and trusted partner, he added.

India says no payment issues with Iran, crude supplies fully secured

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 4: India said on Saturday that there are no payment issues with Iran for crude imports and that refiners continue to source oil from the country, as well as from a wide range of global suppliers.

In a post on X, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas dismissed reports that an oil tanker carrying Iranian crude had rerouted mid-voyage from its previously indicated destination of India, which would have marked the first such shipment in nearly seven years, to China, saying the claims overlooked standard industry practice where cargoes can change destination during transit based on trade optimisation and operational flexibility.

Terming as "factually incorrect" assertions that the cargo was diverted from its previously indicated destination of Vadinar in Gujarat to China due to payment hurdles, the ministry said, "there are no payment hurdles for Iranian crude imports".

"India imports crude oil from 40+ countries, with companies having full flexibility to source oil from different sources and geographies based on commercial considerations," it said.

"Amid Middle East supply disruptions, Indian refiners have secured their crude oil requirements, including from Iran, and there is no payment hurdle for



Iranian crude imports, contrary to the rumours being circulated."

Ship-tracking firm Kpler on Friday stated that Aframax tanker Ping Shun, built in 2002 and sanctioned by the US in 2025, is now signalling Dongying in China as its destination instead of Vadinar in Gujarat, which it had indicated earlier this week.

Oil on Ping Shun would have been the first Iranian crude that India would have purchased since 2019. Indian refiners have been looking at opportunities to purchase a few cargoes of Iranian oil on water following the recent sanctions waiver by Washington.

The ministry clarified that changes in vessel destinations during transit are common in global oil trade, as bills of

lading often indicate tentative discharge ports and cargoes may be rerouted mid-voyage for operational and commercial reasons.

"Claims on vessel diversion ignore how the oil trade works. Bills of Lading often carry indicative discharge ports, destinations and on-sea cargoes can change destinations mid-voyage based on trade optimisation and operational flexibility," the ministry said.

"It is reiterated that India's crude oil requirements remain fully secured for the coming months." The ministry also said that an LPG vessel, Sea Bird, carrying about 44,000 tonnes of Iranian LPG, berthed at Mangalore on April 2 and is currently discharging cargo.

Historically, India was a major buyer of Iranian crude,

importing significant volumes of Iranian light and heavy grades due to strong refinery compatibility and favourable commercial terms.

Following sanctions tightening in 2018, imports ceased in May 2019, with volumes replaced by Middle Eastern, US and other grades. At peak, Iranian crude accounted for 11.5 per cent of India's total imports.

India used to buy 5,18,000 barrels per day of Iranian oil in 2018, which slowed to 2,68,000 bpd between January and May 2019 when the US granted waivers to a few buyers. There have been no imports since.

The key grades that Indian refiners used to purchase are Iran light and Iran heavy crudes.

The US last month waived sanctions on the purchase of Iranian oil at sea for 30 days in its latest attempt to ease oil prices that have been driven up by the US-Israeli war on Iran.

That window expires April 19. An estimated 95 million barrels of Iranian oil are on vessels at sea, of which around 51 million barrels could be sold to India, and the remaining are better suited for buyers in China and Southeast Asia.

Ping Shun is estimated to be carrying about 6,00,000 barrels of oil that was loaded from Kharg Island around March 4. Its declared ETA to Vadinar was April 4, according to Kpler.

In era marked by conflict, Gandhi's principle of non-violence offers way forward: VP



PTI

Motihari, Apr 4: Vice President CP Radhakrishnan on Saturday said in an era marked by conflict, division, and intolerance, Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence offers a powerful way forward for humanity.

Addressing the third convocation of Mahatma Gandhi Central University in East Champaran district, Radhakrishnan asserted that fields such as AI and data science are opening new avenues for growth and innovation, as he urged the youth to embrace these advancements with curiosity and responsibility.

"We all know that Gautam Buddha attained enlightenment in Bihar, and Gandhi found his true 'karma boom' in this very land of Champaran," he said.

Radhakrishnan said, be it Buddhism, Jainism, or the idea of socialist revolution, everything took shape here.

"Bihar has produced visionaries like Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan, who shaped the moral and political conscience of India. I myself, as an 18 or 19 years old, had a deep association with the JP movement in 1974 as the district general secretary of Coimbatore," he said.

The vice president remembered the contributions of Karpooi Thakur, first president Rajendra Prasad and philanthropist Maharani Janki Kunwar in

uplifting India's socio-political status.

Congratulating the graduating students, he urged them to embrace nationalism and play their roles in "building a healthy and resilient society that never accepts non-ethical things".

"As you receive your degrees today, you are expected to serve as torchbearers of India's rich legacy. May you carry forward the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and contribute to the realisation of a strong, prosperous, and well-developed India," he said.

The vice president advised students to use technology for personal growth and to empower society. "Fields such as artificial intelligence and data science are redefining the possibilities and opening new avenues for growth and innovation. I encourage you to embrace these advancements with curiosity and responsibility," he said.

Radhakrishnan said specialised research opportunities provided by the varsity demonstrate its commitment to reviving and promoting India's traditional intellectual heritage.

"I am also informed that the university actively maintains a culture of sports and fitness as part of the Fit India movement. It has established a vision to provide world-class education and build proper talent," he said.

Governor Syed Ata Hasnain and Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary were among those present at the function.

US presses search for missing serviceman as Iran calls on public to find 'enemy pilot'

AP

Tel Aviv, Apr 4: The US military pressed ahead Saturday in a frantic search for a missing pilot over a remote area in southwestern Iran, after the Middle Eastern country shot down an American warplane and called on people to turn the pilot in, promising a reward.

The plane, identified by Iran as a US F-15E Strike Eagle, was one of two attacked on Friday, with one service member rescued and at least one missing. It was the first time the United States lost aircraft in Iranian territory during the war, now in its sixth week, and could mark a new turning point in the campaign.

The conflict, launched by the US and Israel on Feb. 28, has rippled across the region. It has so far killed thousands, upended global markets, cut off key shipping routes, spiked fuel prices and shows no signs of slowing as Iran responds to US and Israeli airstrikes with attacks across the region.

The downing of the military planes came just two days after President Donald Trump said in a national address that the US has "beaten and completely decimated Iran" and was "going to finish the job, and we're going to finish it very fast." The US and Israel had boasted recently that Iran's air defences were decimated.

Missile and drone strikes continued Saturday with an apparent Iranian drone damaging the headquarters of the US technology giant Oracle in Dubai. Israel's military said Iran had launched missiles toward the country.

Meanwhile, the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran said on social media that an airstrike hit near its Bushehr nuclear facility, killing a security guard and damaging a support building. It is the fourth time



the facility has been targeted during the war.

Also, on Saturday, Iran's top diplomat reiterated his government's willingness to join talks aimed at stopping the war. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said they "have never refused to go to Islamabad." Pakistan said last week that it would soon host talks between the US and Iran, but it's not clear when or if they will take place.

Two US planes attacked Saturday's search for the pilot focused on a mountainous region in the country's southwestern province of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad.

Neither the White House nor the Pentagon released public information about the downed planes.

In an email from the Pentagon obtained by The Associated Press, meanwhile, the military said it received notification of "an aircraft being shot down" in the Middle East, without providing more details.

A US crew member from that plane was rescued. But the Pentagon also notified the House Armed Services Committee that the status of a second service member on the fighter jet was not known.

A US military search-and-rescue operation continued Saturday. In a

brief telephone interview with NBC News, Trump declined to discuss the search-and-rescue efforts but said what happened would not affect negotiations with Iran.

Separately, Iranian state media said a US A-10 attack aircraft crashed in the Persian Gulf after being struck by Iranian defence forces.

A US official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive military situation said it was not clear if the aircraft crashed or was shot down or whether Iran was involved. Neither the status of the crew nor exactly where it went down was immediately known.

An anchor on a TV channel affiliated with Iranian state television urged residents to hand over any "enemy pilot" to the police.

Throughout the war, Iran has made a series of claims about shooting down piloted enemy aircraft that turned out not to be true. Friday was the first time the Iranian public was urged to look for a downed pilot.

Iranian state media said in a post on the social platform X that its military shot down a US F-15E Strike Eagle. The aircraft is a variation of the Air Force fighter jet that carries a pilot and a weapons system officer.

Artemis astronauts more than halfway to Moon, putting Earth in rearview

AFP

Houston, Apr 04: The Artemis 2 astronauts have passed the halfway point between Earth and the Moon on Saturday as they sped toward a planned lunar flyby, with NASA releasing initial images of Earth taken from inside the Orion spacecraft.

Astronaut Christina Koch said the crew had a collective "expression of joy" upon being told of the milestone, which was hit around two days, five hours and 24 minutes after the spacecraft blasted off from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

"We can see the Moon out of the docking hatch right now, it is a beautiful sight," Koch said around 11 p.m. (0400 GMT) Friday, according to the space agency's official live broadcast.

NASA's online dashboard showed early Saturday that the Orion spacecraft carrying the astronauts was more than 229,000 kilometers (142,000 miles) from Earth.

The space agency earlier released images from Orion that included a full portrait of Earth, featuring its deep blue oceans and billowing clouds.

After a flurry of high-stakes activity including a dramatic blast-off and



an engine firing that catapulted them on their historic trajectory to circle the Moon, the four astronauts aboard were able to catch their breath, even as they continued to perform a variety of equipment checks and tests.

"There has been a tremendous amount of disbelief for me, it's just so extraordinary," said Canadian Jeremy Hansen during a Q&A session with press late Thursday.

"I really like it up here," said Hansen, on his first ever journey to space. "The views are extraordinary."

"It's really fun to be floating around" in zero gravity, he added. "It just makes me feel like a little kid."

Hansen is on the crew with

Americans Koch, Victor Glover and Reid Wiseman.

They are due to loop around the Moon early next week — a feat not accomplished in more than 50 years.

NASA official Lakiesha Hawkins praised the photographs taken by commander Wiseman, calling them "amazing" during a briefing Friday.

"We continue to learn all about our spacecraft as we operate it in deep space with crew for the first time," Hawkins said.

"It's important to remind ourselves of that as we learn a little bit more day by day."

"Great spirits"

Friday's to-do list includes a CPR demonstration and medical kit checks, the US space agency said, as well as

preparation for the scientific observations they'll need to document when they are closest to the Moon on day six of their journey.

NASA officials reported Friday that all systems were performing well, and that the astronauts were in "great spirits" and had spoken to their families.

The next major milestone of the approximately 10-day journey is expected overnight Sunday into Monday, at which point the astronauts will enter the "lunar sphere of influence" — when the Moon's gravity will have stronger pull on the spacecraft than Earth's.

If all proceeds smoothly, as Orion whips around the Moon the astronauts could set a record by venturing farther from Earth than any human before. "There is nothing normal about this," said mission commander Wiseman late Thursday.

"Sending four humans 250,000 miles away is a Herculean effort, and we are now just realizing the gravity of that."

The Artemis 2 mission is part of a longer-term plan to repeatedly return to the Moon, with the goal of establishing a permanent lunar base that will offer a platform for further exploration.

Zelensky arrives in Istanbul for talks with Erdogan

AFP

Kyiv, Apr 04: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky arrived in Istanbul on Saturday for security talks with Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The visit comes a day after Erdogan spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who accused Kyiv of attempting to target the gas pipeline between Russia and Turkey that also supplies several European countries. "Arrived in Istanbul, where important meetings are scheduled.

Substantive talks have been prepared with the President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan," said Zelensky on X.

"We are working to strengthen our partnership to ensure real protection of people's lives, advance stability and guarantee security in our Europe, as well as in the Middle East," he added.

An AFP correspondent saw a heavy police presence around the lavish Dolmabahce Palace on the shores of the Bosphorus, which also hosted talks between Moscow and Kyiv in the past.



Israeli forces destroy 17 UN peacekeeper cameras in south Lebanon: UN official

AFP

Beirut, Apr 04: Israeli forces destroyed 17 surveillance cameras linked to the United Nations peacekeepers' main headquarters in southern Lebanon in 24 hours, a UN security official told AFP on Saturday.

Since the start of the Israel-Hezbollah war on March 2, the UN force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has been caught in the crossfire in the country's south, with Hezbollah launching attacks on Israel and its troops, and Israeli forces pushing into border towns.

The official, who requested anonymity, said "17 of our headquarters' cameras have been destroyed by the Israeli army" in the coastal town of Naqura.

On Thursday, UNIFIL spokeswoman Kandice Ardiel told AFP peacekeepers had seen "Israeli soldiers conducting demolitions of large parts" of Naqura since the start of the week. "Not only



have these demolitions destroyed civilian homes and businesses, but the strength of the blasts have caused damage to UNIFIL's headquarters," she added.

Three Indonesian peacekeepers from the UN force have been killed in two separate incidents over the past week.

UNIFIL also reported Friday an "explosion" in one of its bases near Odaisseh in

south Lebanon that wounded three personnel, adding that they "do not yet know the origin of the explosion."

The Israeli army accused Hezbollah of firing "a rocket that landed in a UNIFIL outpost."

The UN office in Jakarta said on Saturday the wounded were Indonesian.

Indonesia condemned the incident as "unacceptable," saying "these events underscore the urgent need to strengthen protection for UN peacekeeping forces amid an increasingly dangerous conflict situation."

According to the UN, 97 force members have been killed in violence since its establishment in 1978 to monitor the withdrawal of Israeli forces after they invaded Lebanon.

"This has been a difficult week for peacekeepers working near the central part of UNIFIL's area of operations," Ardiel said in her statement.

Red-hot Rizvi, bowlers power DC to six-wicket win over MI



PTI

New Delhi, Apr 4: Impact substitute Sameer Rizvi continued his red-hot form with another fine half-century as an all-round Delhi Capitals outclassed Mumbai Indians by six wickets in their first home game of the 2026 IPL season here on Saturday.

Chasing 163, the 22-year-old Rizvi (90 off 51 balls) took apart the MI attack with a fluent knock studded with seven fours and as many sixes.

After suffering a top-order wobble for the second successive game, Delhi Capitals steadied through a 66-run stand for the third wicket between Rizvi and Pathum Nissanka, who scored 44 off 30 balls.

Rizvi then added 78 runs with David Miller (17 not out) as the hosts completed the chase with 11 balls to spare.

Initially playing second fiddle to Nissanka, Rizvi shifted gears after the Sri Lankan's dismissal, taking

on the bowlers with ease. The youngster smashed back-to-back fours followed by two towering sixes, including one over deep backward point, to plunder 20 runs off the 11th over bowled by Corbin Bosch.

He continued the assault in the next over, whipping consecutive sixes off Mayank Markande to seize complete control of the chase.

He was unlucky to miss out on his debut IPL ton but received a standing ovation from the crowd when he Bosch got him out.

This was after Delhi Capitals' bowlers dominated to restrict Mumbai Indians to a modest 162 for six despite stand-in skipper Suryakumar Yadav's a patient half-century.

Suryakumar anchored the innings with a 36-ball 51, hitting three fours and two sixes, while Rohit Sharma hit 35 even as other MI batters found it difficult in the middle.

Delhi's bowlers, however, kept things tight.

Skipper Axar Patel was exceptional, conceding just 22 runs in his four overs and removing the dangerous Rohit Sharma.

Leg-spinner Vipraj Nigam (1/24 in 3 overs) chipped in with a wicket, while Kuldeep Yadav (0/31 in 3 overs) proved slightly expensive.

The pace trio of Mukesh Kumar (2/26), Lungi Ngidi (1/34) and T Natarajan (1/24) also played their part, sharing four wickets between them.

Mukesh struck early, removing the in-form Ryan Rickelton with a good-length delivery that was miscued to Axar at mid-off.

Two balls later, he produced a return catch to dismiss Tilak Varma for a duck, leaving Mumbai Indians two down inside the powerplay.

Rohit (35) and Suryakumar then steadied the innings with a 53-run partnership.

Rohit got going with the first six of the match, dispatching an overpitched ball from Nigam over long-on, while Suryakumar followed up with a maximum off the next delivery.

However, Delhi spinners tightened the screws soon after. Axar accounted for Rohit, who mistimed a shot to the cover region where Nitish Rana completed a fine catch.

Vipraj then dismissed Sherfane Rutherford (5), with Mukesh taking a good catch close to the boundary.

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Movies Watchlist

Sunday, 5th April

<p>THE SUPER MARIO GALAXY MOVIE (U/A) ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES 03:45 PM</p>	<p>DHURANDHAR THE REVENGE (A) HINDI ATMOS - 10:00 AM, 02:25 PM, 06:50 PM HINDI - 11:15 AM, 12:20 PM, 04:45 PM</p>	<p>PROJECT HAIL MARY (U/A) ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES 09:20 AM, 06:10 PM</p>
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