



Drug influx into J&K part of larger int'l conspiracy: LG Sinha

» Says 'don't touch innocent, don't spare culprit' is our policy

» Directs dismantling drug trafficking networks, intensifying drives

KNO Desk

Jammu, Apr 09: Asserting that influx of drugs into Jammu and Kashmir is part of a larger international conspiracy aimed at jeopardizing future of the youth, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Thursday directed for continuous and intensive drives to dismantle drug trafficking networks in the Union Territory.

Chairing a high-level meeting here to review the preparedness for the upcoming 100-day intensive campaign under the



Nasha Mukht Jammu Kashmir Abhiyaan, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "The influx of drugs to the UT is part of a larger international conspiracy to jeopardize the future of the youth of Jammu Kashmir. Every section of the society must join this fight against drug menace."

"Don't Touch the Innocent and Don't Spare the Culprit" is our policy. We must identify the real victims of drug abuse and make committed efforts for their rehabilitation," the

Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasized on mass public participation of students and youth, NCC, NSS, Scouts & Guides, volunteers, civil society organizations, political parties, public representatives and the general public to maximize outreach and awareness.

The meeting also discussed the series of activities planned and department-wise activity calendar prepared for the Nasha Mukht Abhiyaan. UT and Divisional Level Committees have already | [More on P6](#)

CM distributes appointment letters to 90 beneficiaries

Encourages new appointees to work with sincerity & dedication

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Apr 09: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday formally distributed appointment orders under SRO-43 and the Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme (RAS) to 90 beneficiaries from across Kashmir division at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC).

The appointments, made on compassionate grounds, aim to provide much-needed employment support to families who have lost their primary earning members, reaffirming the government's commitment to stand firmly with such families in times of distress.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister emphasized that the government has made sincere efforts to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with the people, particularly those



who have endured personal tragedies.

He remarked that while securing a government job is a moment of great pride and happiness, the circumstances under which these appointments are granted are deeply painful for the candidates.

"Some people get

government jobs through examinations and interviews. But you have made a sacrifice far greater than any test. You have lost someone precious, someone who is no longer with you," he said, acknowledging the emotional weight carried by the beneficiaries.

The Chief | [More on P6](#)

Strong nation stands on citizens' integrity: LG

'Humanity cut off from cultural roots loses power'

KNO Desk

Calling upon the youth to reconnect deeply with their cultural roots, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Thursday said that a strong nation stands on citizens' integrity, common values, and trust among people, not just buildings. Addressing a musical opera 'Mata Sukrala Ki Kahani'

depicting the revered legend of Mata Sukrala Devi at Abhinav Theatre here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Humanity cut off from cultural roots loses its power. J&K's youth, anchored in heritage, will prove unstoppable in nation-building." Pertinently the event, organised by Bhartiya Lok Sangeet Kala Sansthan, and J&K | [More on P6](#)

MeT forecasts intermittent rain spells

Weather to remain dry from April 13 onwards

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Apr 09: The Meteorological Department on Wednesday forecast light rain and thundershowers at scattered places in Jammu and Kashmir over the next two days, with a gradual rise in day temperatures expected during the coming week.

An official of the MeT Centre Srinagar told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that brief spells of light rain or thundershowers are likely at scattered locations on April 9-10, with the possibility of hailstorms at isolated places during the afternoon hours.

"The weather is expected to remain partly cloudy on April 11-12, with brief spells of light rain at a few places towards evening. Conditions are likely to remain generally dry on April 13-14, followed by

cloudy skies and light rain at isolated places on April 15-16. The department has forecast dry weather again from April 17 to 20," he added.

Farmers have been advised to resume agricultural operations, while a gradual rise of 4-6 degrees Celsius in maximum temperatures is expected over the next six days.

Meanwhile, Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 17.1°C, 1.7 degrees below normal, and a minimum of 7.0°C, slightly above normal. Qazigund recorded 16.2°C maximum and 5.6°C minimum, while Pahalgam registered 11.8°C and 3.0°C respectively.

Kupwara recorded a high of 16.4°C and a low of 4.0°C, while Kokernag settled at 14.6°C maximum and 4.8°C minimum. Gulmarg, the coldest place in the | [More on P6](#)

India's Israel ties limited mediation role: CM Omar

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Apr 09: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said India's close ties with Israel may have limited its ability to play a mediatory role in the ongoing West Asia crisis, remarking that New Delhi could have otherwise acted like Pakistan.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of distribution of appointment letters under Jammu and Kashmir Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme at SKICC Srinagar, CM Omar as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said only Israel needed this war. Perhaps India could have played a role like Pakistan if our relations with Israel were not so close, terming it his "personal opinion."

He stressed that the United States must "rein in Israel" to ensure the success of ongoing ceasefire efforts, asserting that



the conflict was not initiated by Iran but "imposed" on it. "If the ceasefire fails, it will not be Israel's fault but it will only be Israel's responsibility. The US will have to control Israel," he said.

Referring to remarks by US President Donald Trump, the Chief Minister said the statements coming from Washington lack consistency. "He says one thing in the

morning, another in the afternoon and something else in the evening. The kind of language he uses does not suit anyone, let alone a President," Omar said, adding that such conduct would get ordinary users blocked on social media platforms.

He further said that "people are afraid" of the US President, which is why no action is taken despite | [More on P6](#)

J&K's high-security prison is ready

Home Dept issues formal notification

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Apr 09: The much-talked-about high-security prison in Jammu & Kashmir is now ready, with the Home Department officially notifying it as a prison.

As per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Union Territory's Home Department has issued a notification declaring it both a prison and a designated high-security jail.

"In pursuance of sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the Prisons Act, 1894, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir hereby declares the structures erected on the land measuring 148 kanals, bearing Khasra No. 427 min & 486 min at village Dambra, Tehsil Mahanpur, District Kathua, as a prison, and also designates the said prison as 'High Security Prison, Mahanpur,'" reads the notification issued by Principal Secretary Home, Chandraker Bharti.

The notification has been issued on the orders of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

On July 07, 2024, the Administrative Council headed by the LG created 342 posts for the prison.

The sanctioned staff includes one post each of Senior Superintendent Jail, Superintendent Jail, Deputy Superintendent Jail, and three Assistant Superintendents of Jail.

With this addition, the number of prisons under the Jammu & Kashmir Government has risen to 15, which includes two central jails, 10 district jails, one special jail, and one sub-jail.

It is worth mentioning that Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited the site of the prison in 2022. After reviewing the | [More on P6](#)

Northern Rly runs special Katra-Banihal Train, boosts connectivity

Over 1,000 passengers travel amid highway disruptions

Jammu, Apr 09: The Jammu Division of Northern Railway achieved another milestone today by successfully operating a special train—Train No. 04689/04690 (Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra to Banihal)—between Katra and Banihal.

According to a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), through this special train service, more than 1,000 passengers completed their journeys, thereby significantly strengthening rail connectivity in the region.

This special service was



introduced with the specific objective of providing improved connectivity for passengers traveling from Kashmir

to Katra, particularly in light of road traffic disruptions caused by heavy rainfall. Departing | [More on P6](#)

5 Poonch, Rajouri residents killed in Kuwait accident

Pall of gloom descends native villages

Kin, Mehbooba urge govt to bring bodies home

Sajid Raina

Jammu, Apr 09: Five persons hailing from Poonch and Rajouri districts were killed and another injured after two vehicles collided and caught fire in Kuwait on Wednesday.

Family members of the victims told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the accident occurred when the vehicles crashed and one of them caught fire, with flames quickly spreading and trapping the occupants.

Four of the deceased were residents of the Surankote

area in Poonch district, while one hailed from Thanamandi in Rajouri district.

They have been identified as Fareed Ahmed, Sarfaraz Ahmad, Mohammad Khalid and Mukhtar Ahmad, all from Poonch, and another individual from Rajouri, officials said. The injured person was shifted to a nearby hospital and is undergoing treatment, they added.

According to locals, all the victims were working in Kuwait.

A pall of gloom descended over their native villages as soon as the | [More on P6](#)

Omar announces modern housing colonies to decongest Srinagar

Says dignified housing govt's duty

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Apr 09: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said the government is planning to develop modern, well-planned housing colonies to decongest Srinagar city, emphasizing that providing dignified housing to the underprivileged is both a responsibility and a duty of the government.

Addressing a large public gathering after inaugurating the Imam-ul-Asr Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri (RA) Community Hall at Umerhair, Buchpora in Hazratbal constituency, the Chief Minister highlighted key developmental priorities of his government, including housing, healthcare, transport, and social welfare.

The multi-purpose community facility centre has been constructed at a cost of 3.17 crore, providing a dignified, accessible, and affordable venue for weddings, social functions, and community gatherings.

"As far as Srinagar city is concerned, it continues to face several challenges, particularly congestion in old city areas. In many homes, multiple families live together, placing immense pressure on limited space. Unless we develop new residential colonies, this situation will persist," he said.

"We are planning to develop modern, well-planned housing

colonies, including provisions for affordable housing. This initiative is specifically aimed at those who lack the means to purchase land or construct homes. Providing dignified housing to such sections is not merely a responsibility—it is our duty," he added.

The Chief Minister also underlined the need to strengthen healthcare infrastructure by improving primary health centres, community health centres, and sub-district hospitals to reduce the burden on major hospitals.

Highlighting reforms in the transport sector, he said the introduction of free bus travel for women has seen overwhelming success. "Today, a majority of passengers in public buses are women, which reflects the success of this initiative. Ensuring safe and accessible mobility for our mothers and sisters is our responsibility," he remarked.

Referring to welfare measures in the current budget, the Chief Minister said that promises made to the people are being fulfilled. "When we promised free LPG cylinders during the elections, it was mocked by many. Today, we have translated that promise into action, with six free gas cylinders to be provided to eligible families this year," he said, assuring that all manifesto | [More on P6](#)

Op Sindoor demonstrated India's progression towards 'domain jointness,' says Army Chief

PTI

Bengaluru, Apr 09: Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Thursday said Operation Sindoor demonstrated India's progression towards "domain jointness" and called the military offensive a "defining case study" of operational significance of integration.

In May last year, India had launched a military response targeting terror launchpads



in Pakistan post the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 Indian tourists.

"Operation Sindoor was India's most powerful tool of progression towards domain jointness. But we need to achieve domain integration and fusion," General Dwivedi said.

He was addressing the "Ran Samvad" forum on "Land Forces visualisation of Multi Domain Operation (MDO)," here. The Chief of Army Staff said

his visualisation of MDO is not of six domains operating in parallel but all of them "in constant dynamic interaction where the weight shifts and the lead changes".

The Army chief stressed that modern warfare is no longer confined to geographical boundaries or single-service dominance, but is instead defined by continuous interaction across domains, stakeholders and | [More on P6](#)

CS reviews BISAG-N supported e-Governance initiatives in J&K



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, April 09: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo Thursday chaired a meeting to review the progress of key e-governance and digital transformation initiatives being implemented across Jammu and Kashmir in collaboration with Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-Informatics (BISAG-N).

The meeting, as per an official statement, besides the Secretary, IT, Dr. Piyush Singla; and Special Director General, BISAG-N, Vinay Thakur; was attended by the concerned Administrative Secretaries, Heads of Departments, senior police officers, representatives from the National Informatics Centre, and other stakeholder agencies.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary undertook a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in developing various online platforms across departments aimed at enhancing governance efficiency and improving public service delivery. He sought a detailed, first-hand appraisal from BISAG-N regarding the readiness of these platforms, while also directing departments to address bottlenecks hindering their timely completion

and rollout.

Dr. Piyush Singla apprised the meeting of the overall status of ongoing and upcoming digital initiatives across departments, highlighting completed platforms and outlining their benefits in terms of transparency, efficiency, and citizen-centric service delivery.

Presenting a department-wise overview, BISAG-N shared insights into the initiatives undertaken over the past few years. Special DG, Vinay Thakur emphasized the need to make these initiatives more outcome-driven and time-bound, and advised departments to designate nodal officers for sustained coordination with BISAG-N to ensure successful implementation.

Among the key digital platforms reviewed during the meeting were the AI-based GST Fraud Detection System of the Finance Department and the End-to-End Energy Tracking and Management System (EETMS) for the Discoms under the Power Development Department. The meeting also reviewed improvements in portals such as JKICIP, Kisan Khidmat Ghar, Daksh Kisan Mobile App, and Kisan Sathi developed by the Agriculture Production

Department.

The Tourism Department's web portal and mobile application, featuring an AI-enabled chatbot supported by BISAG-N's GPU infrastructure, were also discussed, with particular focus on their user engagement and service delivery potential.

The survey application for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban 2.0 aimed at identifying homeless and landless beneficiaries across all 78 Urban Local Bodies in J&K was also reviewed. Significant progress in digitization initiatives of the Revenue Department, including Legacy Jamabandi visualization and the online mutation module, was noted.

The Chief Secretary stressed the need for integration of the recently launched Single Window for Recruitment Rules (SWRR-JK) with the e-Office platform to ensure seamless functioning. He also underscored the importance of introducing similar digital systems for the online conduct of Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs).

The meeting further deliberated on the upgradation of the JK Samadhan portal to enable seamless integration with the Centralized Public Grievance

Redress and Monitoring System and to strengthen MIS-based monitoring of grievance redressal timelines at both district and departmental levels.

The Home Department informed the meeting about the readiness of an AI-based search engine designed to assist investigation officers, particularly in preparing charge sheets under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, which is set to be rolled out shortly. Other major platforms reviewed included the JK Sehat Mobile App, Jal Shakti Mobile App, J&K PWD asset mapping application, J&K Industrial Mobile App, MSME Health Clinic App, District Good Governance Index platform, Village Planning Portal of the Planning Department, digitization of SRTC data, and the J&K Anganwadi Tracking System.

Reiterating the Government's commitment to leveraging technology for efficient governance, the Chief Secretary directed all departments to expedite implementation, ensure inter-departmental coordination, and maximize the impact of these digital initiatives in enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen service delivery across Jammu and Kashmir.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER BUDGAM

RE-ADVERTISEMENT

Subject: Advertisement for Recruitment of Sahayikas (Anganwadi Helpers) in Anganwadi Centre of Poshan Project Budgam
Reference: 1. Government order No 222-JK (SWD) of 2022 Dated: 30.11.2022
2. Government Order No.103-JK (SWD) of 2023 dated: 28.04.2023
3. MD/Poshan/47135-46 Dated:- 24-12-2025.
4. Po-ICDS/Advt/AWW-H/01 Dated:- 29-12-2025.

Approval has been accorded, vide letter No: 103-JK (SWD) of 2023 Dated: 28.04.2023 for filling up of various vacancies of Sahayikas (Anganwadi Helpers) in Anganwadi Centre of Poshan Project Budgam as per the details given below:

Sr. No.	Name of Project	Name of Post	No. of Post
01	Poshan Budgam	Sahayikas (AnganwadiHelpers)	02 AWH
		02 Posts	
Total			

Applications are invited in the Prescribed Performa in Annexure "A" from the eligible candidates for engagement as Anganwadi Helpers on Honorarium basis for aforementioned posts of Anganwadi Centers. The important dates/details with regard to the posts are as under:

- Date of commencement for submission of application 11-04-2026
- Last date for submission of applications is 20-04.2026
- Annexure B- Name of the Post, Location/Ward, Qualification and Criteria for selection
- Annexure C- Affidavit

ANNEXURE 'A'

Format of Application

Name of POSHAN Project Budgam _____

- Name of Anganwadi Centre _____
- Post applied for _____
- Name of the Candidate _____
- Father's Name _____
- Husband's Name _____
- Residence _____
- Ward No. _____
- Address for correspondence _____
- Contact No. _____
- Date of Birth _____
- Age as on 01.01.2026 _____
- Academic Qualification: _____

Photograph of the applicant duly attested by Gazetted Officer

Sr. No.	Examination passed	Board/University	Year of Passing	Marks Obtained	Total Marks	Percentage

- Do the candidate belong to Retiring/AWHs (YES/NO)
- Document Attached: _____

Signature of the Candidate _____
Date: _____

ANNEXURE 'B'

Detail of Vacant Posts (AWH) along with name and location of AWC.

S.NO	Name of the Angnwadi Centre	Municipality/Panch Ward No).	Name of the Post	No of Post
1	2	3	4	5
01	Hanji Colony	Ward NO (17) (Limited to Hanji Colony Area only)	Sahayika (Anganwadi Helper)	01
02	Housing Colony (Ompora)	Ward No (08)	Sahayika (Anganwadi Helper)	01

Eligibility:

A. For Anganwadi Helpers

- The candidate must be domicile of the UT of J&K.
- Women candidates in the age group of 18-37 years shall be eligible.
- The candidates should be a resident of the electoral ward where Anganwadi Centre is situated. Name in the voter list for the ward shall be considered as the proof of residence of the candidates. In case the name of the candidate appears in the voter list along with her parents, then she must provide certificate of being un-married issued by the concerned Tehsildar. Where ever, there is any dispute as to residence for any reason, and then a residence proof certifying the ward of residence from the concerned SDM/ACR shall be considered.
- Anganwadi Helpers
- The selection of Helpers shall be restricted to the electoral ward where Anganwadi Centre is located.
- Women candidates in the age group of 18-37 years shall be eligible.
- The candidate must be domicile of the UT of J&K.
- Minimum qualification for Anganwadi Helpers shall be matriculation.
- In case no matriculate candidate available in the ward, candidates with qualification not less than 8th standard shall be considered.
- The committee shall select the most destitute/needy married woman of the ward as helper from amongst those who fulfill the qualification criteria. In case no married candidate is available, unmarried candidate may be considered.
- In case eligible candidate is available within the family of retiring AWWs/AWHs, the said candidate shall qualify for additional two percent points.

Document Verification

- The candidate who is shortlisted for Document verification will be required to appear for Document Verification along-with the original documents as well as self-attested Photostat copy of each document as per the Advertisement Notification. The candidate must be in possession of the prescribed academic qualification and other document like Domicile Certificate, on or before the last date of submission of application form.
- Marks sheet(s)/Diploma/Degree of the qualification prescribed for the post as per Advertisement Notification.
- Date of Birth/Matriculate Certificate.
- Domicile Certificate.
- Unmarried Certificate (where required)
- Photo ID proof. Photo ID Proof can be:
 - Aadhaar Card
 - Voter ID card.
- The candidates who are supposed to furnish various certificate issued by or before the prescribed cut-off date, shall be required to produce them at the time of Document Verification or as may be sought by the Committee; in case of failure, the committee shall take necessary decision which shall be final.

ANNEXURE C

All applicants to submit affidavit stating following facts:

- All Documents submitted are correct, without any mismatch, scanning, duplicate or fallacious in nature. If found incorrect or in any of the above stated situation the candidature of deponent may be cancelled and liable to action under law.
- Maximum qualification is Graduation for vacancy of Anganwadi worker and Class X for and this is as per facts and onus of proving it to be true lies with the deponent.
- The deponent has read the HR policy no. 222-JK(SWD) of 2022 dated: 30.11.2022 and is well versed with all salient features of the policy and shall be applicable to the deponent in case of selection as Anganwadi worker/ Anganwadi Helper.

DIPK-262/26
DATED: 09-04-2026

Child Development Project Officer
Budgam.

No.:CDPO/Poshan/Bud/2026/Re-Adv/89-98

Dated:-09.04.2026

Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan District Admin Bandipora conducts IEC Awareness Programmes

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, APRIL 09: Continuing its sustained outreach under the Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan, the District Administration Bandipora on Thursday organised a series of IEC (Information, Education and Communication) awareness programmes across multiple Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and educational institutions in the district.

The IEC activities, as per an official statement, were conducted at ULB Bandipora (Ward No. 11 Kaloosa), ULB Hajin (Parray Mohalla) and ULB Sumbal (Manz Mohalla). Simultaneously, awareness programmes were held in several educational institutions including HS Malangam, HS Bothu, HS Achoora, HSS Arin, HS Tarabal, HS Barnai and Candles Garden Secondary School Gund Jahangir.

A multi-departmental team comprising officials and resource persons from Health, Police, Education, Social Welfare, Excise & Taxation, Youth Services & Sports and JKNRMLM participated in the programmes, ensuring a coordinated and impactful awareness campaign at the grassroots level.

During the sessions, resource persons sensitised participants about the harmful effects of drug abuse and emphasised the importance of preventive measures, healthy lifestyle choices and collective societal responsibility in eradicating substance abuse.

The programmes witnessed active participation from students, local residents and stakeholders, who engaged meaningfully in the sessions and expressed their commitment to support the Nasha Mukht initiative.

DC Kulgam reviews key infrastructure projects



KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, APRIL 09: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, Thursday chaired a review meeting at the DC Office Kulgam to assess the progress of various ongoing construction projects across the district.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by the Superintendent Engineer PW(R&B) Circle Kulgam, Executive Engineers of the Mechanical Division, R&B Electric Division, KPDC, Jal Shakti (PHE) Division Kulgam/Qazigund, and the District Mineral Officer Kulgam, among other concerned officers.

During the meeting, the DC conducted a comprehensive review of several key infrastructure projects, including Transit Accommodations at Mirhama, Chowgam and Vessu; Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Qaimoh; Government Degree College (GDC) Frisal; Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) Tangmarg; Multipurpose Sports Hall at GDC Kilam; SDM Office D.H. Pora; Tehsil Office Pahloo; PHC Pahloo; Solid Waste Management Sites at Kulgam and Yaripora; Material Recovery Facility (MRF) Kulgam;

DDC Quarters, and ADDC Quarter at Lirrow.

The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the physical and financial progress of each project and sought detailed updates from the concerned executing agencies regarding timelines, bottlenecks and the overall status of execution.

Emphasizing the importance of timely completion of these vital infrastructure projects, the DC directed all executing agencies to expedite the pace of work and strictly adhere to the prescribed timelines.

He instructed officers to closely monitor the progress on the ground and ensure that any issues hindering the execution of works are addressed promptly.

The DC further stressed the need for effective inter-departmental coordination to ensure smooth implementation of projects aimed at strengthening public infrastructure and improving service delivery in the district.

He also directed the concerned officers to submit updated progress reports and ensure regular monitoring so that all projects are completed within the stipulated timeframe.

Floating homes dwindle

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Apr 09: The number of houseboats operating in the Jhelum river and its connected channels has dropped drastically over the years from over 200 earlier to just around 60-70 at present, raising concerns over the survival of the traditional sector.

Chairman of the Houseboat Owners Association (HBOA), Manzoor Ahmad Pakhtoon said that the decline translates into a loss of more than 130 houseboats over time. This data, he said, excludes Dal Lake and includes Jhelum, Tschooni Koul and areas near Dal Gate.

Providing further details, Pakhtoon said the Tschooni Koul stretch alone once had around 100-150 houseboats, but the number has now come down to barely 40. "Even among these, many are deregistered or non-functional," he added.

The concerns come after a houseboat partially sank in the Jhelum in Srinagar's Rajbagh area amid continuous rainfall.

According to officials, the incident occurred between Zero Bridge and Abdullah Bridge after the structure tilted and partially submerged due to conditions in the



river. Timely intervention helped stabilise the houseboat using ropes, preventing further damage. No casualties were reported.

Houseboat owners say such incidents reflect the deteriorating condition of many houseboats.

Pakhtoon said multiple factors have contributed to the decline, including structural damage, fire incidents and deregistration under various government policies.

"Many houseboats were damaged over time, some were lost in fire incidents, while others were deregistered after owners surrendered them under different policies," he said.

He said several owners had surrendered their houseboats with assurances of rehabilitation, including allotment of land or plots. "However, nothing has been provided so far," he claimed.

Pakhtoon said that over 100 houseboat owners had agreed to relocate ahead of proposed water transport initiatives, and their cases were processed by multiple departments, including the Divisional Commissioner's office, Srinagar Development

Authority (SDA) and Flood & Irrigation Department around the year 2022.

"All formalities were completed and still waiting for allotment of land," he said.

Apart from declining numbers, he said the sector is grappling with several operational challenges, including a lack of business, absence of a clear policy framework, non-availability of subsidised timber for repairs and hurdles in licensing and renovation permissions.

Similarly, a houseboat owner from Rajbagh said the situation has worsened over the years. "Our houseboats are ageing, repairs are costly, and there is no support. Even small weather changes now pose a risk, as seen in the recent incident. Without help, it is becoming impossible to sustain this livelihood," he said.

The houseboats have long been part of Kashmir's cultural and tourism identity, particularly along the Jhelum and its connected waterways. However, shifting policies, environmental concerns and lack of sustained support have led to a steady decline in their numbers outside the Dal Lake—(KNO)

CS reviews fuel, LPG stock position of J&K

Orders strict monitoring, action against violators

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Apr 09: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting with the concerned Administrative Secretaries, Divisional Commissioners and District Administrations to review the availability and distribution of essential commodities across the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir in light of the evolving geopolitical situation in West Asia, with the aim of ensuring adequate buffering against any potential supply chain disruptions.

Comprehensive data presented during the meeting indicated that the UT currently maintains stable stocks of Motor Spirit (Petrol), High-Speed Diesel (HSD) and LPG, supplemented by significant stock in transit to further strengthen reserves.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed public grievances registered through helplines and their disposed by Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) and district administrations, while emphasizing the need for intensified IEC campaigns and strict inspections across districts to prevent hoarding, overpricing and black marketing of essential commodities, including fertilizers and food grains. He underscored the importance of ensuring 70 percent supply to commercial and industrial sectors in both divisions and called for expediting e-KYC of all active consumers.

Commissioner Secretary, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Saurabh



Bhagat, informed that adequate measures have been put in place to ensure smooth supply across the UT, including availability of 5 kg LPG cylinders for migrant populations and labourers, and issuance of orders to ensure 70 percent supply to commercial and industrial establishments in accordance with Government of India guidelines.

For Jammu Division, the Divisional Commissioner, Ramesh Kumar apprised that the Division has an availability of 7,325 KL of Petrol and 27,241 KL of Diesel, besides maintaining a robust 49-day cover for Superior Kerosene Oil (SKO) and 12 days for Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), thereby ensuring uninterrupted essential services. Districts including Udhampur, Kathua and Doda reported strong stock levels, while Kishtwar and Ramban are being closely monitored to

continuously replenish their 3-4 day buffers through transit supplies.

He further added that the division currently has 47,296 LPG cylinders in stock, and over the past 10 days, 7,769 cylinders were delivered to the consumers. The Chief Secretary directed the concerned departments to bridge this delivery-demand gap to avoid any disruption to industrial and commercial activities.

For Kashmir Division, the Divisional Commissioner, Anshul Garg informed the meeting that the Kashmir Division currently holds 7,721 KL of Petrol and 13,487 KL of Diesel, which along with transit stocks provides a reserve cover of 19 days for Petrol and 21 days for Diesel, while LPG reserves stand at 4,072 MT ensuring a 16-day cover.

He further made out that District-wise assessments indicated

stable availability, with districts such as Srinagar, Anantnag and Pulwama maintaining consistent consumption patterns and an average of five days of immediate local storage supported by divisional reserves. A total of 148,769 LPG cylinders are currently available in the division, and between April 1 and April 8, 4,987 cylinders were delivered.

Moreover he added that the administration is closely monitoring supply to ensure that tourism, hospitality and other commercial activities remain unaffected, with directions issued to bridge any emerging demand-supply gaps, he

During this meeting the Deputy Commissioners presented the status of supply and distribution of LPG, automobile fuels and food grains across their districts, including residential institutions and labour populations, along with details of enforcement actions taken against violators and progress in grievance redressal.

The Chief Secretary directed district administrations to strictly monitor market prices to prevent hoarding and overcharging under the pretext of international developments and to ensure seamless last-mile delivery of LPG and other essential commodities, particularly in remote and far-flung areas, while reassuring the public that the UT is well-prepared with sufficient reserves and that there is no need for panic as existing stock levels and supplies in transit are adequate to maintain normalcy across Jammu & Kashmir.

Youth delegation from J&K calls on VP

'Watan Ko Jano' Initiative Strengthening National Integration: C. P. Radhakrishnan



PIB

New Delhi, Apr 09: A 250-member youth delegation from Jammu and Kashmir, participating in the 'Watan Ko Jano' programme organised by the Ministry of Home Affairs, called on the Vice President of India, C. P. Radhakrishnan, at Uprashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi today.

The 'Watan Ko Jano' programme is an initiative by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, aimed at fostering national integration by providing the youth of Jammu and Kashmir an opportunity to explore different parts of India.

Addressing the delegation, the Vice President said he was pleased to interact with such vibrant, talented, and determined young minds from Jammu & Kashmir. Recalling his visit to Srinagar last month for the Convocation Ceremony of the University of Kashmir, he spoke about witnessing significant progress in women's development and empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Vice President also highlighted the Jammu and Kashmir cricket team winning the Ranji Trophy for the first time. He said that the leadership of women in education and such sporting achievements by young cricketers together reflect the progressive direction in which the youth of Jammu and Kashmir are shaping the future. Commending

the Ministry of Home Affairs for the 'Watan Ko Jano' programme, he said such initiatives not only help young people connect with the idea of a shared national identity but also build confidence, awareness, and aspiration, while fostering the spirit of "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat."

Highlighting Jammu and Kashmir as a land of extraordinary scenic beauty, and rich culture, he said Jammu and Kashmir has the potential to become a major global tourist destination. He added that as opportunities expand in education, technology, tourism, and entrepreneurship, each young person has the potential to become a builder of a peaceful, prosperous, and inclusive future. He urged them to believe in their abilities, remain connected to their roots, and work collectively towards making Jammu and Kashmir a symbol of harmony, growth, and inspiration for the nation.

The Vice President expressed his happiness that students from Jammu and Kashmir are excelling in Civil Services, IIT, and IIM entrance examinations.

He also urged the students to stay away from drugs and encourage their peers to do the same, emphasising that a healthy youth is the foundation of a strong and progressive nation.

Continued on
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IEP to integrate CwSN with mainstream Govt schools

RIYAZ BHAT

Srinagar, Apr 09: In an unprecedented move, the government is rolling out an Inclusive Education Policy (IEP) to integrate Children with Special Needs (CwSN) with the mainstream government schools.

According to the official notes, the government has said that it is instituting an Inclusive Education policy by integrating CwSN into mainstream government schools.

"The government is implementing the policy of Inclusive Education, which envisages integration of children with special needs into mainstream government schools," reads the official note.

The official said that under this framework, such children are provided necessary support identification, services including assessment, assistive devices, resource support, and trained teaching assistance in nearby schools.

It also said that the Government

is continuously taking measures to strengthen inclusive and barrier-free educational facilities across all districts to ensure equitable access to quality education.

"Further, the government in collaboration with various NGOs and other organizations is running the special schools and inclusive schools for the specially abled children across the UT," it reads.

Furthermore, the official notes reveal that the government has proposed to establish two special schools at Hadipora in Sopore and another at Dailgam in Anantnag. "These schools shall be set up after completion of requisite formalities."

"The approach of the government is to ensure accessible and inclusive education through strengthening mainstream schooling systems, supplemented by establishment of specialized institutions at the regional level," reads the official notes—(KNO)

Open silk route, engage with other countries to boost jobs: Mehbooba

UMAISAR GULL GANIE

Kulgam, Apr 09: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti on Thursday said that Pakistan played an important role in the Iran-Israel-US ceasefire, helping bring the conflict to a halt in a short time.

Speaking at a party convention at Kulgam Mini Stadium, Mehbooba said the ceasefire remains fragile. "The ceasefire is like ice, it can break at any moment. It is difficult for many of us to even mention Pakistan, but it played a crucial role in securing a ceasefire between Iran and the US, helping prevent large-scale devastation. However, I am uncertain how long this ceasefire will hold, as Israel may take actions that could disrupt peace," she said.

The PDP President also advocated reopening traditional trade routes. "Open up the Silk Route. Engage in dialogue with China, Pakistan and Iran, and it can function like the Strait of Hormuz," she said, adding that such a move would create employment opportunities for the youth.

Taking a dig at the National Conference, she said that despite having 50 seats in the Assembly, Omar Abdullah is "under BJP." She added, "Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had only a few seats, yet he made the entire Government



of India listen to us."

Launching a sharp attack on the NC, she said that before elections, the party had promised 200 units of free electricity but instead handed over two more power projects to NHPC.

"When I became an MLA for the first time, there was a Farooq Abdullah government, and at that time, seven power projects were handed over to NHPC. Today, we are in darkness and have to purchase electricity, while our power is supplied free to the rest of the country. Now, two more projects have been given to NHPC by Omar Abdullah. I formed a government with the BJP but never handed over power projects to them. Despite having 50 MLAs, they still did so," she said.

She further said that the National Conference has failed to ensure the return of prisoners lodged outside J&K. "We had once asked them to send a delegation. We can only guide them, but the present government has to act," she added—(KNO)

Kashmir water transport project fast-tracked

Jhelum river cruise to launch on pilot basis by 2027

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Apr 09: The government has fast-tracked its ambitious water transport project in Kashmir, with the Jhelum river cruise set to lead the first phase, likely to be launched on a pilot basis by 2027.

Two MoUs worth Rs 1,000 crore have been signed, with authorities prioritising the Jhelum river cruise project featuring eight terminals across Anantnag, Srinagar and Bandipora.

RTO Kashmir Qazi Irfan Rasool Zargar said the MoUs include Rs 100 crore for a river cruise on Jhelum and Rs 900 crore for a comprehensive urban water transport system covering both Jhelum and Dal Lake, aimed at establishing an eco-friendly alternate transport network in Kashmir.

He said the government is currently focusing on the first MoU concerning the Jhelum river cruise project, which will span across three districts - Anantnag, Srinagar and Bandipora - and include a total of eight terminals.

"The first phase will start from Pantha Chowk

and pass through key locations in Srinagar, including Pantha Chowk and Zero Bridge, followed by multiple terminals before culminating in Bandipora district," Zargar said, adding that land for the terminals has already been identified and allotted.

The RTO said a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) has been constituted for the execution of the project, under which the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) will operate the services. "Work on the construction of platforms has already commenced at several locations," he added.

Highlighting technical aspects, Zargar said that under the Request for Proposal (RFP) floated, the department has planned to introduce electric cruise boats with a seating capacity of around 20 passengers each. "We have focused on e-cruise boats to align with the concept of sustainable mobility, which is being adopted globally," he said, adding that initial procurement is for two such boats.

On concerns regarding the dredging of the riverbed and its potential impact on houseboats

and existing ecosystems, he said the projects have been taken up only after detailed feasibility studies. "This is a major investment, and all technical aspects have been examined. Experts, including teams from Kochi Metro, have conducted surveys on the ground," he said.

The officer added that dredging requirements and water depth will be scientifically managed to ensure smooth operation of vessels without affecting existing structures or livelihoods. "It will be ensured that houseboats and other traditional systems are not impacted by this intervention," he said.

The RTO further said that the second MoU focuses on developing a full-fledged urban water transport system integrating Dal Lake and the river Jhelum, which will significantly enhance connectivity within Srinagar and adjoining areas.

The idea, he said, is to create an alternate transport system on water that will not only ease pressure on roads but also revive waterways for modern use.

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EDITORIAL

Friday Special: Khutba As A Weekly Recharge For Soul

Friday is not merely another day in the Islamic calendar. It is the weekly festival, the master of all days, and the spiritual pivot around which the Muslim week revolves. At its heart lies the khutbah—the sermon delivered before the congregational prayer. This is not a mere ritualistic address but a divinely ordained institution with profound spiritual, social, and moral significance. In an age of relentless distraction and moral fragmentation, the Friday sermon remains an indispensable tool for guiding the Muslim

community towards righteousness. The Quran explicitly commands believers to prioritise the Friday call: "O you who have believed, when the call is proclaimed for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave aside trade. That is better for you, if you only knew" (62:9). This verse establishes the precedence of spiritual engagement over worldly commerce. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) set the highest standard for the khutbah. He would stand on the pulpit (minbar) and address

the congregation on matters of faith, ethics, current challenges, and social justice. His sermons were not abstract theological lectures but practical guidance for navigating life. They addressed economic exploitation, warned against hypocrisy, reminded of accountability in the Hereafter, and urged kindness to neighbours and orphans. The khutbah was a mirror reflecting the community's spiritual health and a compass pointing towards necessary reform. This Prophetic model carries urgent lessons for modern requirements.

The Friday sermon cannot remain confined to repetitive themes that ignore the realities of contemporary Muslim life. The pulpit must address the challenges of our times: the dangers of social media addiction, the erosion of family values, financial ethics in a globalised economy, environmental stewardship, and the psychological pressures of modern living. The khutbah must be a source of unity, not division. It should heal wounds, not deepen them. In an era of polarised discourse, the imam's words can bridge

differences by emphasising shared Islamic values of justice, compassion, and mutual respect. It must counter extremist narratives by presenting the balanced, moderate understanding of Islam that the Prophet (PBUH) exemplified. The Friday sermon is a weekly lifeline. When delivered with sincerity, relevance, and wisdom, it can transform hearts, strengthen communities, and produce believers who navigate the complexities of modern life with faith as their anchor. It is, and must remain, the beating heart of the Muslim week.

India's Green Pathway: From Conservation To Climate Action

By aligning domestic implementation with global cooperation, India continues to contribute to climate stability, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development for present and future generations

Press Information Bureau

In the twenty-first century, the relationship between development and the environment has moved from the margins of policy debate to the centre of national decision-making. For India, the task is especially complex, balancing rapid economic growth with biodiversity protection and climate action.

Key to India's green pathway is the understanding that environmental protection and economic development are mutually reinforcing pillars of national progress. This vision also takes into account the current reality of climate change. As the impacts of climate change become increasingly evident across regions and sectors, the country has recognised it not as a distant risk but as a present developmental reality requiring both preparedness and proactive mitigation. Accordingly, India has adopted a calibrated approach that simultaneously strengthens biodiversity conservation, builds climate resilience and advances sustainable growth.

At the global stage, India has emerged as a credible voice for climate justice, equity and sustainable development. Its approach demonstrates that conservation and climate action are mutually reinforcing pillars of growth, and that prosperity for people and the protection of the planet can advance together.

Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Restoration

India is one of the world's 17 mega-biodiverse countries. Despite occupying just 2.4% of the global land area, it accounts for nearly approximately 8% of all recorded species worldwide. The country is home to over 96,000 animal species and 47,000 plant species, including almost half of the world's aquatic plant species. This extraordinary natural heritage makes conservation not merely an environmental concern, but a national imperative.

The country's biodiversity governance framework is anchored in the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, supported by the National Biodiversity Action Plan and aligned with the Convention on Biological Diversity. India became a signatory of CBD in 1992.

In 2024, at COP16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Cali, Colombia, India launched its updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2024-2030. The roadmap aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, with a long-term vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050. Prepared through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach involving 23 ministries and multiple stakeholders, the plan aligns with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and focuses on ecosystem restoration, species recovery, wetland and coastal conservation, and strengthened biodiversity governance through institutions such as the National Biodiversity Authority and Biodiversity Management Committees.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Core Environmental Laws
 - Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 – Protection of wild animals, birds and plants; creation of protected areas.
 - Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 – Prevention and control of water pollution.
 - Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 – Regulation of diversion of forest land for non-forest use.
 - Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 – Control and abatement of air pollution.
 - Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 – Umbrella legislation empowering the Central Government to protect and improve the environment.
 - Biological Diversity Act, 2002 – Conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use and access-benefit sharing.
- Together, these legislations establish a comprehensive regulatory framework ensuring ecological balance, sustainable resource management, pollution control, and long-term environmental security.
- Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation Programmes
- India has implemented the following key

programmes to conserve wildlife and protect endangered species.

Protected Areas: The Protected Areas network expanded from 745 in 2014 to 1,134 in 2025. Wildlife corridors have been identified to connect habitats and ensure safe animal movement.

Project Tiger: Tiger Reserves increased from 46 in 2014 to 58 in 2025, covering approximately 85,000 square kilometres. The newest addition

is Madhav Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh. The sixth cycle of All India Tiger Estimation has commenced, building on the previous assessment that recorded 3,167 tigers in 2022. India also secures habitat connectivity through 32 identified tiger corridors across key landscapes, strengthening long-term conservation planning and genetic dispersal.

Project Elephant: Elephant Reserves increased from 26 in 2014 to 33 in 2025, bringing an additional 8,610 square kilometres under protection. There are 150 elephant corridors across 15 states.

Project Cheetah: Project Cheetah entered an expansion phase in 2025. Cheetahs were introduced into Gandhisagar Wildlife Sanctuary. Planned expansion includes Noradehi and Banni Grasslands. As of December 2025, the total cheetah population reached 30, including 19 cubs born in India.

Project Snow Leopard: India completed its first nationwide Snow Leopard Population Assessment between 2019 and 2023. The estimated population stands at 718 snow leopards. Ladakh recorded 477 and Uttarakhand 124. Snow Leopard Population Assessment India 2.0 (SPAI 2.0) been launched, in Wildlife Week 2025, to strengthen conservation.

Project Dolphin: Under Project Dolphin, the nationwide survey from 2021 to 2023 estimated 6,327 riverine dolphins. The second range-wide estimation launched in January 2026, from Bijnor covers Ganga River, Indus River, Brahmaputra, Sundarbans and Odisha. It will assess Ganges River Dolphin, Indus River Dolphin and Irrawaddy Dolphin.

International Big Cat Alliance: India leads the International Big Cat Alliance, launched in April 2023 to conserve 7 big cat species globally. The Framework Agreement entered into force on 23 January 2025, with membership expanding to 18 countries.

Five National Level Projects for Species Conservation which includes Project Dolphin Phase 11, Project Sloth Bear, Project Gharial, as well as, four National-level Action Plans & Field Guides for Species Population Assessments and Monitoring Programmes covering River Dolphins, Tigers, Snow Leopard and Bustards were launched during the Wildlife Week 2025 (October 2-8).

These species-focused conservation initiatives are supported by a broader landscape-level strategy that strengthens forest cover, ecosystem restoration and habitat resilience. Protecting wildlife and expanding green cover are pursued together to ensure long-term ecological stability and sustainable resource management across the country.

Ecosystem Restoration

India's diverse ecosystems face growing pressures from climate change, forest fires, habitat degradation, coastal erosion and unplanned land use. Recognising that ecological degradation can directly affect water security, livelihoods and disaster resilience, the Government of India has adopted a multi-layered strategy focused on protection, restoration and climate-proofing of critical ecosystems. This approach combines landscape-level conservation, technology-enabled monitoring and targeted habitat recovery across terrestrial, coastal and wetland ecosystems.

Forest and Biosphere Ecosystems

India's terrestrial conservation efforts are anchored in a strong biosphere reserve network. The country currently has 18 notified Biosphere Reserves covering 91,425 square kilometres, of which 13 are recognised under UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNNBR). The inclusion of the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve in Himachal Pradesh in September 2025 further strengthened India's global conservation footprint.

To safeguard forest ecosystems from

climate-induced risks, India has established a comprehensive forest fire prevention and control system. The Forest Survey of India operates a satellite-based real-time fire monitoring mechanism, with alerts issued through SMS and email and supported by a 24x7 national control room that tracks incidents across the country.

Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam (Plant4Mother Campaign)

Launched as a nationwide people's participation campaign, Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam, "One Tree in Mother's Name" encourages citizens to plant a tree as a tribute to their mothers while contributing to environmental protection.

The Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam campaign has become one of the largest people-centric environmental movements. A total of 262.4 crore saplings were planted till 31 December 2025.

Wetlands and Coastal Ecosystems

Beyond forests and mangroves, India's conservation strategy extends to wetlands and coastal regions, which play a critical role in biodiversity conservation, water security and climate adaptation.

Recognising the role of mangroves as natural buffers against cyclones, storm surges and coastal erosion, India is implementing the Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes (MISHTI). In 2025, the initiative restored 4,536 hectares of mangroves and identified 22,560 hectares (across 13 States/UTs) of degraded mangrove areas for future plantation and restoration.

India has made significant progress in wetland conservation. In 2025, 11 new Ramsar Sites were declared, taking the total to 98 sites as of 31 January 2026, compared to 26 in 2014, now the highest in Asia and the third largest globally by number of sites. Among the recent additions are Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh) and Chhari-Dhand (Gujarat). Further strengthening urban wetland governance, Udaipur and Indore became India's first Ramsar-accredited Wetland Cities.

Coastal ecosystem resilience is being reinforced through the National Coastal Mission, which has been extended for 2025-31 with an allocation of 767 crore. The mission implemented as part of the National Action Plan on Climate Change aims to enhance the climate resilience of India's coastline through integrated coastal zone management, ecosystem restoration and community-based adaptation. It focuses on conserving mangroves, coral reefs and other coastal ecosystems as natural buffers, addressing coastal erosion and sea-level rise, strengthening scientific planning and monitoring, and promoting sustainable livelihoods to ensure balanced coastal development.

Blue Flag beaches are coastal sites certified for maintaining international standards of cleanliness, water quality, safety and sustainable management. The certification is awarded by the Foundation for Environmental Education and implemented in India by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) under the Integrated Coastal Zone Management programme. India achieved Blue Flag Certification for 18 beaches. These beaches are spread across 7 coastal states and 4 Union Territories. This certification was achieved by the 2025-26 season.

Human-Wildlife Conflict Management

To ensure harmonious coexistence between humans and wildlife, the Ministry issued advisories to states on managing human-wildlife conflict under the Wildlife Protection Act. The advisories recommend coordinated action, identification of conflict hotspots and establishment of rapid response teams. State and District level committees review ex-gratia relief, and the Government ensures relief payment within 24 hours in cases of death and injury.

A Centre of Excellence for Human-Wildlife Conflict Management, and a Project on "Tigers Outside Tiger Reserve" were launched during the Wildlife Week 2025 (October 2-8).

These efforts demonstrate that environmental protection is not pursued in isolation but is closely linked with inclusive development and social equity. By integrating climate

action, community participation and coexistence strategies within a broader development framework, India aligns environmental stewardship with the objectives of sustainable and equitable growth.

Even as India scales up biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration, climate change continues to pose the most profound and cross-cutting threat to ecological stability and developmental gains. Rising temperatures, increasing frequency of extreme weather events, changing rainfall patterns and sea-level rise are already exerting pressure on forests, wetlands, coasts and communities. It is recognised that conservation efforts alone, while essential, are not sufficient unless supported by deeper structural transitions in energy and towards green development pathways.

India's focused climate action combines preparedness for climate risks with proactive mitigation through clean energy expansion, low-carbon technologies and policy reforms.

Climate & Strategic Policy Frameworks

National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and its nine National Missions: The NAPCC provides the overarching framework for India's climate strategy. Its missions, covering solar energy, energy efficiency, sustainable habitat, water, Himalayan ecosystems, Green India, sustainable agriculture, strategic knowledge, and later additional missions, integrate adaptation and mitigation into sectoral planning.

Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement: In its updated NDC (2022), India committed to reducing the emissions intensity of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 45% from 2005 levels by 2030 and achieving about 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. India has already reduced emissions intensity by around 36% between 2005 and 2020 and crossed 50% non-fossil installed capacity ahead of schedule.

Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategy (LT-LEDS): Submitted to the UNFCCC in 2022, India's LT-LEDS outlines pathways toward net-zero emissions by 2070. National Green Hydrogen Mission and renewable energy expansion targets: Launched in 2023, the National Green Hydrogen Mission aims to make India a global hub for production, usage and export of green hydrogen, targeting 5 million metric tonnes of annual production by 2030. This is supported by accelerated renewable energy deployment, with India targeting 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030.

Together, these instruments anchor India's pathway from conservation to climate action, aligning ecological protection with sustainable development.

Mission LIFE

Climate change poses serious risks to water security, livelihoods and economic stability. Without timely action, global estimates suggest nearly three billion people could face water shortages, and the global economy could shrink by up to 18 percent of GDP by 2050. Behavioural change at scale can make a significant difference. If one billion people adopt sustainable lifestyles, global carbon emissions could fall by approximately 20 percent.

The **Mission LIFE (Lifestyle for Environment)**, launched by the Government of India, promotes climate-conscious individual and community action. Under Mission LIFE, more than six crore people have participated in over 34 lakh events and 4.96 crore pledges have been taken as of December 2025.

International Climate Commitments and Multilateral Engagement

India's domestic progress is supported by consistent international engagement. To operationalise international carbon market mechanisms under Article 6, India has designated the National Designated Agency for Implementation of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement as the national authority.

At UNFCCC COP30 held in Belém, Brazil in November 2025, India highlighted its climate leadership and underscored the need to move from commitments to implementation. India emphasised enhanced climate finance and technology transfer for developing countries. India also welcomed Brazil's initiative to launch the Tropical Forests Forever

Facility (TFFF) and joined it as an Observer.

India continues to lead global solar cooperation through the International Solar Alliance (ISA) under the vision "One World, One Sun, One Grid." The Eighth ISA Assembly, held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi in October 2025, saw participation from over 550 delegates and 30 ministerial representatives, reinforcing global commitment to clean energy transition.

Under the Montreal Protocol, India has demonstrated strong progress by phasing out major ozone-depleting substances ahead of mandated timelines. Following ratification of the Kigali Amendment in 2021, India is advancing the phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons. By 2025, India achieved a 67.5 percent reduction in production and consumption of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC).

India's international climate commitments are reinforced by measurable domestic action. Multilateral engagement provides direction and cooperation, while implementation at home translates pledges into structural transformation. This alignment between global responsibility and national execution is most visible in India's accelerated clean energy expansion.

Clean Energy Expansion and Structural Energy Transition

India's clean energy expansion marks a decisive structural shift from fossil-fuel dependence to diversified, low-carbon sources. Guided by commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and domestic reforms, the transition aims to enhance energy security, sustainability, and long-term economic resilience.

In 2025, India achieved over 50 percent cumulative installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources, five years ahead of its 2030 target.

As of 31 January 2026, India's total installed power capacity stands at 520,510.95 MW. This comprises 248,541.62 MW from fossil fuels and 271,969.33 MW from non-fossil sources. The non-fossil component includes 8,780 MW of nuclear energy and 263,189.33 MW of renewable energy.

As per International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Renewable Energy (RE) Statistics 2025, with data as on December 2024, globally, India stands 3rd in Solar Power installed capacity, 4th in Wind Power capacity and 4th in total Renewable Energy capacity. The transition is visible across scales. On 09 October 2022, Modhera in Gujarat became India's first 24x7 solar-powered village, demonstrating round-the-clock clean energy supply through integrated solar systems. The Omkareshwar Floating Solar Park in Madhya Pradesh is India's largest (as on 04th January 2025) and one of Asia's largest floating solar parks. Such projects optimise resource use and expand renewable energy capacity in innovative ways.

Energy efficiency improvements complement capacity expansion. The CO₂ emissions intensity of the power sector per unit of GDP declined from 61.45 tonnes per crore in 2015-16 to 40.52 tonnes per crore in 2022-23, reflecting cleaner growth pathways and technological improvements.

These gains in efficiency are supported by policy instruments that reinforce long-term emission reductions across sectors. To sustain this momentum, India's climate strategy combines regulatory frameworks with market-based mechanisms and technological innovation, strengthening accountability and accelerating the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Carbon Markets, Industrial Transition and Climate Finance Mechanisms

India's climate strategy integrates regulation, market mechanisms and technological advancement. The operationalisation of the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme marks a major step in strengthening India's domestic carbon market under the Indian Carbon Market framework. The scheme establishes compliance and offset mechanisms aligned with global practices and supports measurable emission reductions.

Full article on <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?Noteld=158047&ModuleId=3®=3&lang=1>

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Struggling Industrial Units in J&K: Deputy CM takes up revival with JCCI

'Govt actively working towards addressing concerns through timely, effective measures'

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 09: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, is taking proactive steps to boost the industrial sector in Jammu and Kashmir with emphasis on recalibrating incentives, streamlining approvals and establishing institutional mechanisms for revival of ailing industries.

He convened an exclusive meeting with the Jammu and Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) to discuss the strategies for promoting industrial growth and reviving sick units in J&K. The meeting, as per an official statement, aimed to create a conducive environment for the industries, focusing on income security, skill development and generating employment opportunities



for locals. President, Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Jammu, Arun Gupta, Treasurer, Rajesh Gupta and other representatives from JCCI besides officials were present in the meeting held at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu. During the meeting, a detailed discussion was held on

various issues faced by the industrial stakeholders. The Deputy Chief Minister assured that the government is actively working towards addressing these concerns through timely and effective measures. Emphasising the revival of sick industrial units, he stressed the need for revamping the

industrial policy to facilitate ease of doing business and ensure smooth and timely operations of industries across J&K. He further highlighted the importance of providing adequate infrastructure, including uninterrupted water and power supply, improved road connectivity and other essential facilities in the industrial estates to support seamless functioning of the industrial units.

The stakeholders raised several key issues, including industrial incentive packages, timely release of allotments, streamlining of registration processes and concerns related to Phase-III Samba.

The Deputy Chief Minister assured that all their genuine concerns would be addressed on priority to further boost industrial growth in the region.

Advisor to CM Nasir Aslam Wani meets delegations at Raabita



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR APRIL 09: Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani Thursday met several delegations and individuals at the Chief Minister's Public Outreach Office, 'Raabita' and listened to the issues and demands raised by them.

Delegations, as per an official statement, from Ganderbal, Pattan, and Budgam called on the Advisor and apprised him of various public concerns and developmental issues of their respective areas. In addition, several individuals from across the Kashmir valley also met the Advisor

Wani to highlight issues related to local development works and other community matters.

The Advisor patiently listened to all delegations and individuals, assuring them that their genuine concerns would be examined and forwarded to the concerned departments for appropriate action.

Director Ayush-J&K chairs introductory review meeting



KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 9: Dr. Ajay Kumar Tikoo Thursday chaired the maiden meeting at the Directorate conference Hall after taking over as the Director Ayush-J&K.

Dr. Rakesh Kumar Raina Assistant Director, Ayush welcomed the Director. He hoped that the Ayush sector would prosper in leaps and bounds under his leadership.

At the outset, as per an official statement, different sections of the Directorate including Accounts, Establishment, Planning, National Ayush Mission and the J&K Medicinal Plants Board gave comprehensive presentations. The respective section heads apprised the Director of the progress and achievements under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), as well as Capex and Non-Plan components.

Dr. Ajay Kumar Tikoo appreciated the work done by different sections and emphasized the need for a result-oriented and accountable approach in implementing various programmes and schemes. He called for improved monitoring mechanisms, advising each section to adopt a structured review system with periodic

progress reporting and clearly defined timelines.

Underscoring the need for better coordination and innovation, the Director called for enhanced inter-sectional synergy and the use of digital tools for real-time tracking and transparency in implementation. He also emphasized intensified field monitoring through regular visits by officers to ensure effective execution of schemes at the grass-roots level.

With regard to the J&K Medicinal Plants Board, Dr. Tikoo highlighted the importance of promoting cultivation of medicinal plants, strengthening farmer linkages and ensuring convergence with allied departments to unlock the sector's full potential.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Directors (Ayurveda/Unani) Dr. Rakesh Kumar Raina and Dr. Sujad Hussain Shuja; Assistant Director Planning, Archana; Accounts Officer Vishesh Kapoor; Technical Officer, J&K SMPB Dr. Wahid-Ul-Hassan; Nodal Officer (Litigation), Jammu, Dr. Ramesh Chander and other officers and officials of the Directorate. Officers and officials stationed at Srinagar joined the meeting through virtual mode

Javed Rana lays foundation for major eco-tourism projects at Shahstar

KT News Desk

POONCH, APRIL 09: In a significant push towards sustainable development and environmental conservation, Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, Thursday laid the foundation stone for a series of ecotourism and infrastructure projects in the Mendhar and Surankote areas of Poonch.

The initiatives, as per an official statement, undertaken by the Department of Forest, Ecology & Environment, mark a concerted effort by the government to harness the area's natural beauty while ensuring ecological balance and community participation.

Senior departmental officials and local residents were present on the occasion.

Among the key projects was development of an Eco Park at Shahstar, with an estimated cost of Rs 90 lakh under the SASCI scheme. The park is envisioned as a hub for nature-based tourism, offering the visitors an immersive experience while fostering environmental awareness and conservation practices.

To strengthen the field operations and improve monitoring capabilities, an Inspection Hut will also be constructed at Shahstar at a cost of 20 lakh under CAMPA. Additionally, a Block Officer Quarter at Pahar Masjid, to be built under the CAPEX budget at 35 lakh, will enhance the Forest Department's presence in the area and provide better residential facilities for staff.



Further boosting ecotourism infrastructure, the Minister laid the foundation for a trekking route complemented by cafeteria facilities to be developed at an estimated cost of 6 lakh under the CAPEX budget. This project is expected to attract more adventure enthusiasts while creating livelihood opportunities for local communities.

Collectively, these projects amounting 1.51 crore, have been designed to integrate the conservation efforts with economic development.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister emphasized that the initiatives would open up sustainable employment avenues for the local youth as tourist guides, hospitality worker and service providers while also increasing the visitor footfall and regional revenue.

"These projects reflect our firm commitment to preserve our natural resources while simultaneously

creating opportunities for sustainable tourism and improving the livelihoods of local communities," the Minister said.

He added that strengthening forest infrastructure would enable departmental personnel to carry out conservation works more effectively.

Highlighting the long-term vision, the Minister stated that such initiatives would help position Mendhar and Surankote as promising destinations for eco and adventure tourism in Jammu & Kashmir, drawing in visitors seeking pristine landscapes and authentic experiences.

Rana also issued strict directions to the executing agencies to ensure timely completion of all projects. He emphasised the need for maintaining accountability and quality in work execution. He called for strict adherence to the set technical standards and warned against any compromise in construction practices or material quality.

AHD Shopian drives livestock growth

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, APRIL 09: Animal Husbandry Department (AHD) Shopian has registered notable achievements under various government initiatives, significantly strengthening livestock-based livelihoods and rural economy in the district.

Under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), as per an official statement, focused interventions in dairy, poultry, and fodder development have yielded tangible outcomes both in physical and financial terms.

Under Dairy Development, the department established two Satellite Heifer Units, one Milk Value Addition Unit, and five Automatic Milk Collection Units (AMCU) with cost of Rs 104.29 lakh.

Similarly, under the Roadmap for Poultry Development, 17 Free Range Units were established with an investment of Rs 17 lakh, providing sustainable livelihood opportunities to beneficiaries.

In the fodder sector, significant progress was achieved under Project 28 with the establishment of three Silage Making Units, three Hydroponic Units, distribution of four Chaff Cutters, development of 18 fodder demonstration plots, and distribution of 35 seed kits.

Under the Integrated Dairy Development Scheme, 44 Dairy Units, three Milking Machines, and two Vermicompost Units were established with a financial achievement of Rs 75.772 lakh, further strengthening dairy infrastructure in the district.

The department also recorded major physical achievements during 2025-26, with milk production reaching

75.633 thousand tons and egg production touching 5.356 million.

In the breeding sector, 34,810 artificial inseminations were carried out and 9,972 births were recorded, indicating steady genetic improvement in livestock.

Animal healthcare services were significantly expanded, with 2,29,276 lakh doses administered for cattle vaccination, 0,558 lakh doses for poultry vaccination, and 1,77,728 lakh doses under deworming programmes, while 67,619 cases were treated across the district.

In addition, 121 awareness camps were organized to educate farmers on scientific livestock management practices.

Under DAJGUA-NLM, the department facilitated the establishment of three poultry units (100 birds each) with a financial support of Rs 0.75 lakh, promoting backyard poultry and supplementary income generation.

Under the NLM Scheme, 442 dairy animals were insured to cover risk due to death. Further, 674 equines were also registered and provided insurance cover for SANJY 2025-26.

To provide, doorstep facilities to farmers, two Mobile Veterinary Units are operational in the district manned by two Paravets and One qualified Vet. The MVUs provide facilities like free medicine including deworming, besides arranging awareness camps across all Panchayats of the district.

These achievements reflect the department's sustained efforts in improving productivity, enhancing farmer income, and ensuring sustainable livestock development in Shopian, thereby contributing significantly to the district's rural economy.

3-day Census training workshop concludes in Kathua

KT News Desk

KATHUA, APRIL 09: A three-day Training Workshop for District and Charge Level Clerical Assistants, conducted by District Administration Kathua in coordination with the Directorate of Census Operations Jammu & Kashmir, concluded successfully Thursday at the Conference Hall of DC Office Complex here.

The workshop, as per an official statement, was held under the close supervision of Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma, who is also the Principal Census Officer.

The training programme, held from April 7 to April 9, 2026, was organised as part of capacity-building measures for the forthcoming Census operations, in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.

Addressing the participants, the Deputy Commissioner appreciated the active participation of the trainees and underscored the critical role of trained manpower



in ensuring smooth, accurate and error-free Census operations. He expressed confidence that the trained officials would contribute effectively to the successful conduct of Census 2027.

During the three-day workshop, participants were imparted comprehensive training on various aspects of Census-related activities, including data collection procedures, use of digital tools, field-level coordination and reporting mechanisms. Emphasis was laid on maintaining accuracy, efficiency and strict adherence to timelines.

Resource persons highlighted the importance of meticulous planning and close coordination at the grassroots level for the

successful execution of Census exercises. The sessions also featured interactive discussions and practical demonstrations, enabling participants to gain hands-on experience and clarity regarding their roles and responsibilities.

Among others, Additional Deputy Commissioner Vishavjeet Singh; District Statistics & Evaluation Officer Kathua Sidharth Anand; District Informatics Officer Shubham Singh; Nodal Officer Seirin Kohli and Sanjay Kumar (District Coordinator) from Directorate of Census Operations, J&K, besides other officers and officials associated with the forthcoming Census exercise, participated in the training programme.

Inspection drive of chemist shops, drug de-addiction centres conducted in Jammu North

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 09: To enforce compliance with the Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan under NCORD and adherence to prescribed Standard Operating Procedures, a joint inspection drive of chemist shops and drug de-addiction centres was conducted Thursday across the territorial jurisdiction of Jammu North.

The inspection team, as per an official statement, was led by Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Dr. Deepak Kumar, accompanied by SDO Domana, Mudassir Chowdhary and the Drug Inspector, Jammu North.

During the extensive drive, the joint team inspected several medical establishments to verify the maintenance of the records, functionality of CCTV cameras and implementation of mandatory computerized billing systems with invoices being verified on the spot by the officials.

Emphasizing a zero-tolerance policy against medical negligence, the SDM Jammu North directed all chemists to ensure

the availability of qualified personnel, proper record-keeping and functional billing systems. It was reiterated that such surprise inspection drives will continue in the future and warned that stringent action will be taken against violators to safeguard public health and ensure transparency in the sale of medicines.

Further, the joint team also inspected drug de-addiction centres to ensure compliance with prescribed guidelines. The inspection focused on verification of valid registration/licenses issued by the competent authority and their renewal status, availability of qualified medical staff including psychiatrists, doctors, nurses and trained counselors and maintenance of proper patient admission and discharge records including consent forms and case histories.

The team also enquired as to if there is illegal detention or confinement of patients and those admissions were carried out strictly in accordance with legal provisions. Verification of prescription practices and proper storage of scheduled drugs was also undertaken.

DC Bandipora holds interactive session with G&B hostel students

KT News Desk

BANDIPORA, APRIL 09: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, visited the Gujjar and Bakarwal Boys Hostel Bandipora and held an engaging interactive session with students of Classes 10th, 11th, and 12th.

During the session, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, welcomed open questions from students and spoke at length on career pathways, leadership, and ethics, drawing from her own academic and professional journey to inspire young minds to pursue their aspirations with dedication and integrity.

She underscored the importance of balancing sports and physical activity with

academics for holistic development, and stressed the need for regular mental health sessions within the hostel to nurture students' overall well-being.

On the occasion, 13 meritorious students were felicitated for their outstanding performance in the recently concluded Annual Examinations.

The session was attended by Bashir Ahmad Khan, Warden; Munawar Hussain Lone, Assistant Warden; and Altaf Ahmad Mir, Tutor, who also served as Anchor and Moderator for the proceedings.

Students and hostel staff expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Deputy Commissioner for her visit and for the encouragement and motivation she brought to the young scholars of the hostel.

LG releases 8th Edition of 'Kailakh Sandesh Panchang Calendar'

KT News Desk

Jammu, Apr 09: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday released the 8th Edition of 'Kailakh Sandesh Panchang Calendar' for Vikram Samvat 2083, published by Shri Kailakh Jyotish and Vedic Sansthan Trust, at Lok Bhavan, Jammu.

The Lieutenant Governor congratulated Mahant Rohit Shastri, President, Shri Kailakh Jyotish & Vedic Sansthan, members of the Trust, editorial team, and everyone associated with the publication.

The Panchang Calendar serves as a comprehensive spiritual guide, providing insights about Vedic traditions, festivals, religious rituals and auspicious occasions.

Trustees and members of Shri Kailakh Jyotish & Vedic



Sansthan Trust, including R.K. Chhibber, Rakesh Gandotra and Kulbhushan Jamwal were also present on the occasion.

Meanwhile, a delegation of Jain International Trade Organisation (JITO), J&K led by Sandeep Jain also called on the

Lieutenant Governor.

The members of the delegation briefed LG Sinha on various recitation events of the Navkar Mahamantra, on the occasion of Vishwa Navkar Mahamantra Diwas, organised by several Jain organisations in the region.

DC Srinagar reviews telecom infrastructure dev under JKCCIP

Calls for expanding 4G, BharatNet, 5G connectivity

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Apr 09: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Thursday chaired a meeting here to review and discuss the development of telecom infrastructure under Jammu & Kashmir Communication and Connectivity Infrastructure Project (JKCCIP).

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner, Rifat Aftab Qureshi, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Dy Superintendent of Police, Syed Sleeth Shah, Chief Planning officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintending Engineer R&B, Shabir Ahmad, DIO NIC



Srinagar, Shahnaz Nayeem, besides Officers from Forest, SDA, PCC and representatives of various telecom companies operating in district.

During the meeting, the Committee deliberated on key issues related to strengthening of telecom infrastructure and enhancement of network connectivity across Srinagar

district. Detailed discussions were held regarding construction and commissioning of mobile towers, 4G saturation, status of Right of Way (RoW), progress under the amended BharatNet Project, 5G street furniture mapping and other related matters.

On the occasion, the DC highlighted the importance of close coordination among all related departments to ensure that telecom infrastructure projects are completed on schedule. He emphasised connecting every panchayat to its respective block in a timely manner to strengthen local governance and improve service delivery.

The DC urged the saturation of 4G network coverage and the BharatNet projects across the

district, noting that these initiatives are vital for enhancing digital connectivity and benefiting residents across all communities.

Highlighting the significance of robust telecom networks, the DC stated that improved connectivity is vital for effective governance, delivery of essential services, education and economic activities. He reiterated that strengthening network coverage and improving signal quality are crucial for public welfare and the overall development of the district.

During the meeting, the DC also took detailed feedback from telecom companies operating in Srinagar district and urged them to enhance the quality of telecom services, particularly in remote areas.

Israel lifts restrictions at holy sites in Jerusalem after fragile ceasefire announced

AP

Tel Aviv, Apr 09: Worshippers were able to pray again at Jerusalem's holy sites Thursday after Israel lifted restrictions it imposed on large public gatherings throughout the war with Iran nearly six weeks ago.

Jerusalem's police said on Wednesday that they would lift restrictions on all holy sites and deploy hundreds of officers and volunteers in the city.

Access had been prohibited

altogether, or restricted to a few dozen faithful at a time, at Christian, Jewish and Muslim sites during the now-paused conflict, when missile attacks from Iran often sent Jerusalem residents into shelters.

The restrictions subdued Lent, Passover and Ramadan celebrations for many in some of the holiest sites for adherents of Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

The Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, closed for much of the holy month of Ramadan and

the Eid al-Fitr holiday, reopened with dawn prayer Thursday, according to Jerusalem's Islamic Waqf, the Jordanian religious authority that administers the compound. At the adjacent Western Wall in the Old City — the holiest site in the world where Jews can pray — dozens of men and women were seen bowing their heads in prayer.

The lifting of the restrictions comes just in time for Orthodox Christians, who celebrate Easter on Sunday, a week after Catholic

and Protestant observances and before the centuries-old ceremony known as the Holy Fire that is associated with it.

On Saturday, thousands of Christians will gather in the cavernous Church of the Holy Sepulchre holding unlit candles as they pack into the sprawling 12th-century basilica built on the site where, according to tradition, Jesus was crucified and buried. The Greek patriarch will light candles and then the flame is passed from one candle to the next.

The restrictions sparked backlash last month when Israeli police prevented Catholic leaders from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to celebrate a private Mass on the Christian holiday of Palm Sunday for the first time in centuries. That set off a wave of criticism from the United States and others.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said there was no "malicious intent" and that Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa was prevented from

accessing the church because of safety concerns. He was later allowed to enter on Easter Sunday.

On Thursday, worshippers revelled as they entered Al-Aqsa for the first time in weeks.

"It is as if human beings are reborn," said Mohammed Al-Qassas. Being unable to pray during this period is like "feeling hungry all the time," he said.

"It's impossible to describe this feeling... It was one of the most happiest moments in my life," said Biljana Vasic, a

tourist from Serbia who, until now, hadn't been able to enter the church.

Still, others accused Israel of using the war as an excuse to restrict access. "This is a grace from God after 40 days of using the war as a pretext, but God has granted steadfastness in this mosque," said Omar al-Kiswani, director of the mosque.

Even before the war, there were already heightened restrictions on people being able to access Al-Aqsa.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Drug influx into

been constituted for effective implementation of the IEC campaign and action plan.

The Lieutenant Governor further directed to make the campaign a Jan Andolan with active participation of people. He also called for integration of public suggestions along with the feedback mechanism to make this campaign more impactful. Common public should also be encouraged to report the drug abuse cases, he said.

Permanently, the campaign, aimed at eradicating drug abuse from the Union Territory, will be marked by a series of high-impact awareness programs. The Lieutenant Governor will flag off a mega "Padyatra" from MA Stadium, Jammu, on April 11, 2026, followed by a similar large-scale launch in Srinagar during the first week of May.

The meeting was attended by Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; S.J.M Gillani, Special DG (Coordination); Chandraker Bharti, Principal Secretary Home; Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Sarmad Hafeez, Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare Department; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Bhim Sen Tuti, IGP Jammu; V.K Birdi, IGP Kashmir; DIGs, Deputy Commissioners, SSPs and other senior officials. (KNO)

CM distributes

Minister noted that no compensation can truly substitute the loss of a loved one, adding that if there would ever be a choice to make, no one would ever choose employment over the return of a departed family member.

Highlighting systemic reforms, the Chief Minister stated that the transition from SRO-43 to the Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme was aimed at addressing structural shortcomings and improving efficiency.

He acknowledged delays in processing such cases and assured that further efforts would be made to remove bottlenecks.

"Even today, there are gaps in the system which we will try to remove. We understand that delays in clearances and procedures add to your hardship. We will make every effort to simplify and expedite this process," he said.

Describing the situation faced by beneficiaries as a colossal loss, the Chief Minister stressed that forcing affected families to navigate cumbersome procedures would amount to injustice.

"After such a loss, if people are made to move from office to office, it is a grave injustice. We are committed to ending this," he asserted.

Congratulating the appointees, the Chief Minister described the occasion as the beginning of a new chapter in their lives and urged them to dedicate themselves to public service with honesty and integrity.

He reminded them that, unlike elected representatives whose tenure depends on public mandate, government employees have a long-term responsibility to serve the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"From today till your retirement, you will serve the people. Always choose the difficult but correct path over the easy one," he advised.

He cautioned the new recruits against external influences and urged them to remain vigilant and committed to ethical conduct in their professional roles.

Reiterating the government's supportive stance, the Chief Minister encouraged beneficiaries to reach out to concerned authorities in case of any difficulty, assuring that their concerns would be addressed promptly.

Invoking faith and hope, he prayed for their success in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The Chief Minister appreciated the efforts

of the Divisional Administration, particularly the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir and his team, for facilitating the issuance of appointment orders and expressed hope that pending cases would be cleared expeditiously.

The event was attended by Minister Javid Ahmad Dar, Minister Satish Sharma, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Commissioner Secretary General Administration Department M. Raju, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Commissioner SMC Fazlul Haseeb, MD KPDCI Mahmood Ahmad Shah, Director SKICC Haris Ahmad Handoo, Director Tourism Kashmir Qamar Sajad, other senior officers, and a large gathering of beneficiaries along with their families.

Strong nation

Academy of Art, Culture & Languages (JKAACL), encapsulates Goddess Sukrala's timeless message of true devotion remains incomplete without righteous action, while action devoid of devotion loses its essence.

LG Sinha said, "Nation-building is rooted in our shared mindset. A strong nation stands on citizens' integrity, common values, and trust among people, not just buildings. My message to the youth is that true nationhood sparks alive when self-interest gives way to community good." He said that the cultural heritage is a powerful societal resource that shapes our thinking, actions, values, beliefs and acts as a backbone for society.

He called upon the youth to reconnect deeply with their cultural roots. "Humanity cut off from cultural roots loses its power, J&K's youth anchored in heritage, will prove unstoppable in nation-building," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor said, "Truth, faith in the Divine, and love for our motherland bind us together. Mata Sukrala's grace and our common heritage spur nation-building efforts. Dugger Culture's lively stories, arts, and folk practices carry timeless wisdom from elders to youth."

The Lieutenant Governor stated that when we revitalize these traditions through various artistic mediums, we are not merely reminiscing about the past; we are making an investment in the future. By breathing new life into traditional values, we are preparing the younger generation to lead with a strong moral and cultural compass, he said.

He said the paramount challenge today is viewing nation-building solely as governmental duty.

"Nation-building is a collective responsibility. Aware citizens guide a nation's path because indifference undermines even the mightiest systems. So, awaken your sense of duty and I firmly believe culture will anchor our identity," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He emphasised that our ancient culture embodies bravery, togetherness, devotion, and responsibility. "Reviving it through diverse art forms honors history while fueling the future, reigniting principles for young people to carry forward," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that vibrant culture molds how we think, understand, and live.

"India's rich and diverse traditions with distinct charm and insight, held together by mutual respect forms our essence and unity. This spirit turns attention from personal gain to giving back to the society and building a developed nation," he said.

Dr. M.L. Dogra, Chairman & Founder, Bhartiya Lok Sangeet Kala Sansthan; Dr. Vijay Kumar Magotra, Managing Director, Bhartiya Lok Sangeet Kala Sansthan; Brij Mohan Sharma, Principal Secretary Culture, senior officials and people in large number attended the musical

opera. Yudhvir Sethi, Satish Kumar Sharma and Devyani Rana, Members of Legislative Assembly; Padma Shri Dr S P Varma, Padma Shri Prof. Vishwamurti Shastri, Padma Shri Balwant Thakur, Ashok Bhan, former DGP and prominent citizens were also present. (KNO)

J&K's high-security

blueprint, the Home Minister suggested certain changes. (KNO)

India's Israel ties

repeated threats, and questioned the larger objective of the conflict. "Before anything else, the purpose of this war should have been made clear," he said.

Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister distributed appointment letters to 90 beneficiaries under the Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme (RAS), replacing the older SRO-43 scheme, across 10 districts of Kashmir.

Calling it a duty of the government, Omar said, "These appointments are not a favour. This is our responsibility to support families of those who died in service so their households don't suffer."

Commenting on reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) regarding shrinking water bodies, he said the situation is visible on the ground. "We don't need CAG to tell us this—we are living it. Water bodies have either disappeared or shrunk due to urbanisation, land pressure and climate change," he said.

He stressed that environmental protection requires collective responsibility. "This is not just the government's job. All of us must act if we want to leave behind a better Jammu and Kashmir for future generations," he added, urging reduced use of plastic.

On urban local body elections, Omar said they will be held "at the appropriate time," without specifying any timeline.

Reacting to the proposed Women's Reservation Bill, the Chief Minister questioned the need for fresh legislation when one had already been passed. "We were told it would be implemented after census and delimitation. What has changed now? The government must clarify," he said, reiterating support for women's reservation in principle.

On reported losses in the horticulture sector, Omar said the government is working to roll out a crop insurance scheme announced in the Budget. "Earlier interventions were largely cosmetic. This time, we want real benefit for the common grower," he said, adding that the scheme will be implemented soon to provide relief against weather-related losses. (KNO)

MeT forecasts

Valley, recorded a maximum of 5.5°C and a minimum of minus 2.5°C.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded a maximum of 25.5°C, 4.9 degrees below normal, and a minimum of 12.2°C. Banihal registered 16.6°C and 6.6°C, Batote 16.0°C and 5.4°C, while Katra recorded 23.0°C maximum and 10.7°C minimum.

Bhaderwah recorded a maximum temperature of 15.5°C and a minimum of 3.4°C, the MeT office said. (KNO)

Northern Rly runs

from Katra, the train carried a large number of tourists alongside local residents, all of whom traveled with great enthusiasm. Furthermore, passengers thoroughly enjoyed their journey while profusely appreciating this initiative undertaken by the Jammu Division.

According to the Railway Administration, the primary objective behind this successful operation is to ensure safe and rapid transportation

across challenging terrains. Stringent arrangements regarding security and passenger amenities were implemented at the station to ensure that travelers did not face any inconvenience. In the near future, the frequency of this train's operations may be further increased, subject to demand and prevailing circumstances.

The highlight of this initiative was the successful operation of the train itself, which facilitated the travel of over 1,000 passengers, thereby providing them with superior and direct rail connectivity.

This special unreserved train service between Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra and Banihal is scheduled to operate once again on April 10.

Continuing this series of special trains, Train No. 04679/04680—a special service connecting Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra and Srinagar—is scheduled to operate from April 11 to April 15. Passengers holding either reserved or unreserved tickets may avail themselves of this train service for their journeys.

The train schedule is as follows: Train No. 04679 will depart from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra at 10:10 AM and arrive in Srinagar at 1:35 PM.

On its return journey, Train No. 04680 will depart from Srinagar at 3:15 PM and reach Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra at 7:00 PM. En route, this train will make scheduled stops at Reasi, Sangaldan, and Banihal railway stations in both directions.

Commenting on the successful operation of the train, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Mr. Uchit Singhal stated, "Due to ongoing heavy rainfall and landslides in the region, road traffic on the National Highway (NH-44) has been completely disrupted.

Considering the difficulties faced by passengers—particularly devotees visiting Shri Mata Vaishno Devi and local residents—the Railways has decided to operate a special train service between Katra and Banihal.

Our primary objective is to provide a safe and convenient travel option for stranded passengers. On its inaugural day today, the train carried over 1,000 passengers. The passengers have highly appreciated this special train service.

Keeping this commendable initiative in mind, and with the aim of providing even better facilities to locals and tourists, a special train service has once again been launched between Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra and Srinagar.

Both reserved and unreserved passengers are eligible to travel on this train. Passengers are requested to avail themselves of this special train service. (KNO)

5 Poonch, Rajouri

news reached there. The incident has triggered grief and sent the entire area into mourning with neighbours offering condolences to the bereaved family.

Authorities in Kuwait have initiated an investigation into the accident, officials said.

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti appealed to the Government of India to facilitate the return of the mortal remains of the deceased to their homes.

The family members of the deceased victims have also appealed to the LG administration and the Ministry of External Affairs to facilitate the return of the deceased bodies to their home. (KNO)

Omar announces

commitments would be implemented with sincerity and accountability.

Congratulating MLA Hazratbal Salman Ali Sagar, the Chief Minister said the completion of the community hall reflects his dedication and

perseverance. "This is not merely a building; it is a symbol of service, community spirit, and respect for our rich intellectual and spiritual heritage," he said.

The Chief Minister noted that the facility would serve as an affordable and dignified venue for social functions, especially for families who cannot afford private banquet halls. He said the centrally located hall is equipped with modern amenities, including a spacious hall, multiple rooms, dedicated spaces for bride and groom, essential facilities, and parking provisions.

He directed the Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) to prepare a comprehensive plan for further development of the surrounding area, including parking and landscaping, to enhance the utility and aesthetics of the complex.

Emphasizing youth empowerment, the Chief Minister called for the establishment of a library in the vicinity and assured full government support. He also stressed the need to dedicate a section of the proposed library to preserve and showcase the life and contributions of Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri (RA), so that future generations remain connected with his legacy.

"Together, we will continue to represent the Hazratbal constituency and address your concerns—be it related to SMC, LCMA, or any other department. We stand committed to your service," he assured.

Member of Legislative Assembly Khanyar Ali Mohammad Sagar, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) Gurwinder Singh Oberoi, MLA Lal Chowk Sheikh Ahsan Ahmed (Pardesi), Commissioner SMC Fazlul Haseeb, senior officers, party functionaries and a large gathering of people were present on the occasion.

Op Sindoor demonstrated

levels of conflict. "We are living through a dispersed, undeclared, multi-theatre, multi-domain war of our times. The question is not whether domains interact, it is how the interface is orchestrated across the battle space," he said.

General Dwivedi drew a distinction between land domain and land forces, explaining that while the former refers to the operational space, the latter represents the actors, comprising all six domains—land, air, maritime, cyber, space and cognitive—operating in a shared environment.

He underlined that these domains are no longer siloed but function through dynamic synergy.

Elaborating on the evolving battlefield, General Dwivedi noted that MDO has transformed warfighting into a layered, three-dimensional construct.

"In MDO, the battlefield is no longer a line on a map. It's a 3D—cyber effects shaping the cognitive space, space assets cueing targets, and electronic warfare contesting every frequency simultaneously," he said.

He emphasised that commanders must develop cross-domain situational awareness from the tactical to strategic level.

Highlighting the operational significance of integration, General Dwivedi referred to Operation Sindoor as a "defining case study".

"It was a ground intelligence network coupled with cyber and EW (electronic warfare) inputs that gave the joint army-air force targeting, while the navy's repositioning shaped the strategic calculus simultaneously. No single domain decided the operation," General Dwivedi added.

He described such mutually enabling actions as the essence of MDO.

SC asks states to treat rising child trafficking cases as grave; seeks coordinated action

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 9: The Supreme Court has voiced grave concern over rising cases of child trafficking, saying gangs are operating across the country and if States and Union territories do not take immediate action, thing will go beyond control.

The court said only the state government and its home department can act vigilantly in this regard.

"As a court we can monitor, but ultimately the action has to be on the part of the state government, the police, and other agencies. Therefore, this is our humble request", a bench comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and K V Viswanathan said during the hearing of a plea on Wednesday.

The bench was irked over the "lackadaisical" approach of several states and UTs in implementing a 2025 judgment aimed at dismantling organised trafficking



networks.

Justice Viswanathan said the retrieval of children in some cases proves the problem can be tackled, but it requires a level of political and administrative will which is lacking at present.

The verdict, delivered on April 15, 2025, had mandated several

institutional reforms, including completion of trials in trafficking cases within six months on a day-to-day basis.

It had also directed strengthening of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) and improving investigation standards.

Besides asking for setting up of

state-level committees to monitor vulnerable trafficking hotspots, it had asked the authorities to treat missing children cases as trafficking unless proven otherwise.

Earlier, the bench had termed the compliance reports filed by a few states as "nothing but an eye wash." On Wednesday, the bench noted that Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Haryana, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Odisha, and Punjab had still failed to file reports in the prescribed format.

When the home secretary of Madhya Pradesh offered an apology for the lapse, the bench granted a "final opportunity" but warned that continued failure would lead to states being officially branded as "defaulting".

The bench noted that at least 15 states are yet to constitute review committees mandated to identify and monitor trafficking-prone areas.

The matter will now be heard on April 29.

PM appeals to voters to oust 'nirmam' TMC govt from Bengal



PTI

Haldia, Apr 9: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday slammed the Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal for its alleged misrule and appealed to voters to oust the TMC from power in the upcoming assembly polls. Addressing a gathering in Haldia, the backyard of Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari, Modi said that the ruling dispensation in the state was "pulling Bengal back".

"The country is walking on the path of progress, while TMC's 'nirmam sarkar' (cruel government) is pulling Bengal back. To usher in 'Viksit Bengal', it's

essential that the party is removed from power," he claimed.

He also alleged that the "TMC cheated Bengal's youth on two counts -- destroyed the private sector and looted government posts for money".

"Investment does not come in an atmosphere of fear, but in a climate of trust that the BJP will bring in Bengal," Modi said at the industrial hub.

He accused the TMC of following a "religion-based reservation policy to secure its vote bank".

"People's huge attendance at Haldia rally despite inclement weather is an indicator of change in Bengal, and a sign of TMC's

exit," the Prime Minister asserted.

Modi said, "The assembly poll result in Nadigram five years ago will be repeated in Bhabanipur this time."

Adhikari had defeated Mamata Banerjee in Nadigram in 2021 and is pitted against the incumbent chief minister at her bastion in south Kolkata's Bhabanipur.

Criticising the Trinamool Congress, Modi said, "Even in 100 years, the TMC cannot absolve itself of sins it committed against Bengal's youth."

Battling for a double-engine government in West Bengal, the Prime Minister told the gathering that the state "would not benefit by opposing the PM, but will profit only when a PM and a CM act in unison".

He promised the people of West Bengal of making the state self-sufficient in fisheries and the seafood sector, while highlighting that the BJP government at the Centre has set up a dedicated ministry for the welfare of the fisherfolk and allotted a record budget for them.

Live fish gets lodged in Indore toddler's throat; removed after surgery

PTI

Indore, Apr 9: A routine task of cleaning a home aquarium turned into a medical emergency for an Indore family after a fish jumped into their toddler's throat.

Doctors surgically removed the fish from the one-year-old boy, officials said on Thursday.

The freak incident occurred on April 3, when the child's elder siblings were cleaning their aquarium and playing with ornamental fish kept in a net.

A fish suddenly jumped out of the net and fell into the toddler's mouth while he was laughing loudly, officials said.

Panicked family members rushed the boy to the Government Maharaaja Yashwantrao Hospital (MYH). Head of the ENT department at MYH, Dr Yamini Gupta, told PTI, "The nearly three-inch

fish was alive and flapping vigorously as it was stuck in his throat. It caused injuries, and blood mixed with saliva was coming out. The child had anxiety, restlessness and breathing difficulty."

Gupta said the team decided to perform an emergency surgery. A six-member medical team removed the fish, which was dead by then, during a half-hour "complex procedure".

Doctors monitored the child for a few days after the operation and later discharged him from the hospital. He is now healthy, she said.

"This is the first case in central India where a fish stuck in a one-year-old's throat has been removed through surgery," Gupta said. She said objects stuck in young children's throats can prove fatal as their airways are narrow.

Stock markets slump after sharp rally in previous session on fresh tensions in West Asia



PTI

Mumbai, Apr 9: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty slumped on Thursday afternoon trade after an impressive rally in the previous session as fresh tensions in West Asia threatened the ceasefire reached between the US and Iran.

Weak trends in Asian markets and unabated foreign fund outflows also drove the markets lower.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 938.55 points or 1.21 per cent to hit an intra-day low of 76,624.35. The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 237.9 points or 0.99 per cent to 23,759.45.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Larsen & Toubro, InterGlobe Aviation, HDFC Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank

and Eternal were among the major laggards.

NTPC, Bharat Electronics, Tata Consultancy Services and Power Grid were among the gainers.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 2.15 per cent to USD 96.79 per barrel.

In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index declined after a sharp rally in the previous trade.

US markets ended significantly higher on Wednesday. The Dow Jones Industrial Average jumped 2.85 per cent, Nasdaq Composite surged 2.80 per cent and S&P 500 climbed 2.51 per cent.

BJP backs amendments to Women Reservation Act

■ Supports PM Modi's call for consensus



PTI

New Delhi, Apr 9: The BJP on Thursday voiced support for the amendments to the Women Reservation Act, backing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for consensus, and said the proposed amendments will strengthen democratic representation.

PM Modi on Thursday said that the proposed amendments to the Women Reservation Act are not just a legislative exercise but a reflection of the aspirations of crores of women across

India and urged all MPs to come together to support this significant move.

In a signed article posted on his website narendramodi.in, the prime minister also said that the initiative is an affirmation of a principle that has long guided India's civilisational ethos that society progresses when women progress. He said it is imperative that the 2029 Lok Sabha elections and the Assembly elections to the various states in the coming times are conducted with women's reservation in place.

BJP national president

Nitin Nabin said the government has consistently kept women at the centre of its policies.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, our government has always kept women power at the center of governance. From PM Awas Yojana to Ujjwala, priority has been given to women in every scheme," he said in a post on X.

He added that ensuring representation of women in legislative institutions is imperative to further strengthen democracy. BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said the prime minister has urged all parties to arrive at a consensus on the amendments to the Women Reservation Act.

"The Women's Reservation Bill will ensure greater representation in Parliament and state assemblies," he said in a post on X. Another party national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari described the Nari Shakti Vandan Act as a "historic leap" towards empowerment.

World Bank raises India's FY27 growth forecast to 6.6%

■ Says Middle East crisis may dent growth



PTI

New Delhi, Apr 9: The World Bank has marginally raised India's growth projections for 2026-27 fiscal to 6.6 per cent and said that although GST rate cuts would boost consumer demands in the initial months of the fiscal, headwinds arising from the Middle East crisis could dent growth.

The FY27 projection compares with estimates of 6.9 per cent by the RBI, 6.1 per cent by the OECD, and 6 per cent by Moody's Ratings.

In its South Asia Economic Update report released on Wednesday, the World Bank said India's growth is estimated to have accelerated from 7.1 per cent in FY25 to 7.6 per cent in FY26 (April 2025-March 2026), owing to strong domestic demand and export resilience.

Private consumption growth was particularly robust, supported by low inflation and rationalisation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). "Growth is projected to

decelerate to 6.6 per cent in FY27, reflecting headwinds from the Middle East conflict," it said.

Although the reduction in GST rates should continue to support consumer demand in the first half of FY27, elevated global energy prices are expected to put upward pressure on prices and constrain households' disposable income, it said.

Government consumption growth is expected to soften to set higher subsidy outlays for cooking fuel and fertilizers. Investment growth is likely to moderate amid elevated uncertainty and rising input costs, the World Bank said.

Improved access to the United States and the European Union for India's exports will be undermined by slower growth in major trading partners, it added.

The World Bank in its Global Economic Prospects report in January had projected India to grow 6.5 per cent in 2026-27.

The World Bank said the impact of the Middle East crisis is highly uncertain and other forecasters have revised down their growth projections to a range between 5.9 and 6.7 per cent for FY27.

On February 28, the United States and Israel launched military strikes against Iran, triggering sweeping retaliation from Tehran.

On April 8, Iran, the United States and Israel agreed on a two-week ceasefire in the war that tore across the Middle East and disrupted the global energy market.

Sabarimala judgement proceeds on assumption that men are superior: Centre to SC

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 9: The Centre on Thursday backed the restriction on the entry of women of menstruating age into Kerala's Sabarimala temple, saying that the top court's 2018 judgement proceeds on the assumption that men are superior and women are on a lower pedestal.

A nine-judge Constitution bench is hearing petitions related to discrimination against women at religious places, including the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, and on the ambit and scope of religious freedom practised by multiple faiths.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told the Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant that he filed a written submission and gave instances where men are not allowed in temples.

"It is a Devi Bhagwati temple, there are certain faiths and beliefs attached. There is one temple in Kerala, I read it, where men will go dressed as women. They go to beauty parlour and female family members help



them dress in saree...

"So it is not a question of male-centric or female-centric religious beliefs. In the

present case, it happens to be woman-centric," Mehta told the bench, also comprising Justices B V Nagarathna,

M M Sundresh, Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Masih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan

and Joymalya Bagchi.

At the Kottankulangara Sree Devi Temple in Kerala, men dress as women annually for the Chamayavilakku festival, honouring the goddess in a tradition dating back centuries.

Additional Solicitor General KM Nataraj said public morality is the governing standard, and not the constitutional morality as interpreted earlier.

In September 2018, a five-judge Constitution bench, by a 4:1 majority verdict, had lifted the ban that prevented women between the ages of 10 and 50 from entering the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple in Kerala, and held that the centuries-old Hindu religious practice was illegal and unconstitutional.

Later, on November 14, 2019, another five-judge bench headed by the then CJI Ranjan Gogoi, by a majority of 3:2, referred the issue of discrimination against women at various places of worship to a larger bench.

The bench had then framed broad issues on freedom across religions, saying they cannot be decided without any facts of the particular case.

Iran publishes chart showing it may have put sea mines in Strait of Hormuz as shaky ceasefire holds



AP
Dubai, Apr 9: Semiofficial news agencies in Iran published a chart Thursday suggesting the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard put sea mines into the Strait of Hormuz during the war, in a message that may be intended to pressure the US as uncertainty hangs over a days-old two-week ceasefire and further negotiations are expected in Pakistan.

The shaky ceasefire has been largely holding between the US, Israel and Iran, although Tehran and Washington have offered vastly different explanations of the initial terms.

Israel insists the agreement does not apply to their war against Hezbollah militants in Lebanon and have escalated deadly strikes there, leading Iran to claim it is violating the deal.

Meanwhile, Iran said it had won agreement that it would control the Strait of Hormuz, charge tolls and enrich uranium — while Trump said the deal called for the Strait to be reopened and Iran to hand over its uranium stockpile.

The chart of the Strait of Hormuz was released by the ISNA news agency, as well as Tasnim, which is believed to be close to the Guard. They showed a large circle marked "danger zone" in Farsi over the Traffic Separation Scheme, which was the route ships take through the strait, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20 per cent of all oil and natural gas traded once passed.

The chart suggested ships travel further north through waters closer to Iran's mainland near Larak Island, a route that some ships were observed taking during the war. It was dated from

February 28 until Thursday, April 9, and it was unclear if the Guard had cleared any mining on the route since then.

Oil rose again to above USD 97 a barrel and Asian stocks were trading lower Thursday on scepticism over the ceasefire.

Brent crude, the international standard, was up 2.9 per cent to USD 97.46 per barrel. It had fallen briefly to below USD 92 following the temporary ceasefire announcement. Benchmark US crude was 3.7 per cent higher Thursday at USD 97.94 per barrel.

Ship-tracking data from Kpler showed only four vessels with their Automatic Identification System trackers on passed through the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday, the first day of the ceasefire.

However, that does not include so-called "dark fleet" vessels, which travel with their AIS trackers turned off. Many of those "dark fleet" ships carry sanctioned Iranian crude oil out to the open market.

Trump says US forces will remain in the area

US President Donald Trump posted a statement insisting that his surge of warships and troops will remain around Iran "until such time as the REAL AGREEMENT reached is fully complied with".

Trump's comments on his Truth Social platform appeared to be a way to pressure Iran.

"If for any reason it is not, which is highly unlikely, then the Shootin' Starts, bigger, and better, and stronger than anyone has ever seen before," Trump wrote.

He also insisted Iran would not be able to build nuclear weapons and "the Strait of Hormuz WILL BE OPEN and SAFE."

The US and Iran both claimed

victory after reaching the ceasefire agreement, and world leaders expressed relief. But more drones and missiles hit Iran and Gulf Arab countries after the deal was announced.

Israel's strikes in Lebanon Israel also intensified its attacks on the Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon on Wednesday, hitting commercial and residential areas in Beirut. At least 182 people were killed in the deadliest day of fighting there. First responders searched overnight for missing people still under the rubble after the deadly Israeli strikes.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported Thursday that an Israeli strike overnight had killed at least seven people in southern Lebanon. The Israeli military did not immediately acknowledge the strike.

The violence threatens to scuttle what US Vice President JD Vance called a "fragile" deal.

Iran's parliament speaker said Wednesday that planned talks were "unreasonable" because Washington had broken three of Tehran's 10 conditions for an end to the fighting.

In a social media post, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf objected to Israeli attacks on Hezbollah, an alleged drone incursion into Iranian airspace after the ceasefire took effect and US refusal to accept any Iranian enrichment capabilities in a final agreement.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi insisted an end to the war in Lebanon was part of the ceasefire deal, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump said the truce did not cover Lebanon.

When the deal was announced, the prime minister of Pakistan, which served as a mediator, said in a social media post that it applied to "everywhere including Lebanon and elsewhere".

A New York-based think tank warned the ceasefire "hovers on the verge of collapse".

The Soufan Centre said Israel's strikes on Lebanon on Wednesday added to the risk the deal would fall apart.

"Even if Lebanon was formally outside the deal, the scale of Israel's strikes was likely to be viewed as escalatory, nonetheless," it wrote in an analysis published Thursday.

NATO chief says some European allies were tested & failed in Iran war

REUTERS

Washington, Apr 9: NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said on Wednesday he believes that some NATO countries were tested and failed amid Washington's criticism over European allies not getting involved in the US and Israel's war against Iran.

Rutte's comments came after a meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House earlier in the day.

During an interview with CNN, NATO chief was asked if he believed NATO countries were tested and failed.

"Some of them yes, but a large majority of European countries, and that's what we discussed today, have done what they promised before in a case like this," he told CNN.

Rutte said he had a "frank and open" discussion with Trump, where the Republican expressed disappointment with America's allies.

He said he pointed to Trump that European countries assisted with logistics and other commitments.

UK urges extension of ceasefire to Lebanon

AFP

London, Apr 9: Britain's foreign minister said Thursday the UK "strongly" wanted to see Lebanon included in the ceasefire in the Middle East as Prime Minister Keir Starmer arrived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"We do want to see the ceasefire extended to Lebanon. I'm deeply troubled about the escalating attacks that we saw from Israel in Lebanon yesterday," Yvette Cooper told Sky News.

"We've seen the humanitarian consequences, the huge mass displacement of people in Lebanon. So we do strongly want to see the ceasefire extended to Lebanon," she said.

Cooper's comments came as Starmer arrived in the UAE on the second leg of his visit to the Gulf to meet with regional leaders in an effort to bolster the ceasefire in the Middle East war.

Starmer on Wednesday met Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Jeddah.

"The prime minister began by welcoming the ceasefire and set out how efforts must now be focused on upholding it and turning it into a lasting peace," a Downing Street spokesperson said in a statement.

"He was clear that it was vital now to continue work to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, and discussed the UK's ongoing efforts to convene partners to agree and plan the practical steps required to give shipping the confidence to transit the Strait," the spokesperson added.

Afghanistan, Pakistan agree to explore solution after weeks of fighting

AP

Beijing, Apr 9: Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed not to escalate their conflict and to "explore a comprehensive solution" after several weeks of cross-border fighting that has killed hundreds of people, China's government said Wednesday after mediating talks.

All the parties also agreed to keep the dialogue after seven days of peace talks mediated by China in the western Chinese city of Urumqi under China mediation, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said.

"The three parties agreed to explore a comprehensive solution to the issues in the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and clarified the core and priority issues that need to be addressed," Mao said during the daily briefing in Beijing.

She said that they acknowledged that "terrorism is the core issue affecting the relationship."

Afghanistan and Pakistan said that they won't "take actions that would escalate or complicate the situation."

There was no comment from Islamabad about the week-long talks.

But Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Abdul Qahar Balkhi, said on Wednesday that the talks between the Afghan and Pakistani delegations, hosted and mediated by China in Urumqi, have concluded.

In a post on X, he said that the talks were held in a "constructive atmosphere," with discussions focusing on bilateral relations, security issues and regional stability. Balkhi thanked Beijing for hosting the talks and expressed hope that the process would help strengthen trust, deepen relations and promote effective cooperation in the region.

The talks began last week in Urumqi at the invitation of China, in an effort to stop the conflict that began between the two countries in February.

Pakistan, which declared it was in "open war" with its neighbor, has also carried out airstrikes inside Afghanistan, including in the capital Kabul.

Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that the talks had been constructive.

Rashid Khan unlikely to feature in one-off Test against India in June



PTI

New Delhi, Apr 9: Advised by doctors to stay away from red-ball cricket following a back surgery, star Afghanistan all-rounder Rashid Khan has hinted that he might skip the one-off Test against India in Mullanpur in June.

While the prospect of playing a Test in India is enticing, Rashid maintained his priority remains staying fit for the 2027 ODI World Cup in South Africa.

The 27-year-old, who underwent lower-back surgery following the 2023

ODI World Cup, revealed that doctors have cautioned him against the traditional format. Despite that, he featured in a Test against Zimbabwe last year, bowling 54 overs and picking up 11 wickets.

"Very tough question. It's a little difficult in red ball, because that was the first thing which was told to me by the doctor. 'You have to stay away from red ball.' But I still played a Test against Zimbabwe," Rashid told reporters after starring in Gujarat Titan's one-run win over Delhi Capitals in the IPL on Thursday.

Gill fined Rs 12 lakh for GT's slow over-rate against Delhi Capitals



PTI

New Delhi, Apr 9: Gujarat Titans skipper Shubman Gill has been fined Rs 12 lakh for maintaining a slow over-rate during their Indian Premier League clash against Delhi Capitals, which they won in a thrilling last-ball finish here.

Gujarat Titans secured their first win of the season with a one-run victory over the hosts in a high-scoring cliffhanger on Wednesday.

Gujarat Titans (GT) Captain Shubman Gill has been fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate during Match No. 14 of the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 against Delhi Capitals (DC) at Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi," said an IPL media advisory. "As

this was his team's first offence of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which pertains to minimum over-rate offences, Gill was fined INR 12 lakh," it added.

In a nail-biting contest, David Miller had a momentary lapse in judgment, refusing a single off the penultimate delivery from Prasidh Krishna before missing the final ball.

Kuldeep Yadav then failed to get past Jos Buttler's direct hit, as Delhi Capitals finished at 209 for 8 in their chase of Titans' 210.

Gujarat Titans will next take on Lucknow Super Giants in Lucknow on Sunday, while Delhi Capitals are set to face Chennai Super Kings in Chennai on Saturday.

Pope Leo heads to Africa on ambitious tour to urge help for continent

REUTERS

Vatican City, Apr 9: Pope Leo leaves on Monday for a visit to four countries in Africa, in an ambitious tour to urge global leaders to address the needs of the continent where more than a fifth of the world's Catholics live on his first major overseas trip of 2026.

Over 10 days from April 13-23, Leo will travel nearly 18,000 km (11,185 miles) to visit 11 cities and towns in Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea as part of a whirlwind itinerary that includes 18 flights.

The pope is making the visit with a mission "to help turn the world's attention to Africa," Cardinal Michael Czerny, a senior Vatican official and close adviser to Leo, told Reuters.

"By heading to Africa so early in his pontificate, the pope shows that Africa matters," Czerny said. "Leo wants to make sure that Africa is not forgotten by countries and people caught up in their own concerns."

Leo, who in recent weeks has emerged as an outspoken critic of the Iran war, has made only one big overseas trip since being elected last May, visiting Turkey and Lebanon in November and December. He visited Monaco in March.

Vatican officials and African Church leaders say the upcoming tour is a personal priority for Leo, the first US pope, and a sign of the value the Church places on the continent, the place where Catholicism is growing fastest.

More than 20 percent of the world's Catholics live on the continent, according to Vatican statistics. Three of the countries Leo is visiting have populations where more than half of the people identify as Catholic.

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