



## Pak smuggling drugs into J&K to fund terrorism, destroy our youth: LG Sinha

» We will map every hotspot, hit each one like a surgical strike » Not a single smuggler will be spared, entire network will be dismantled

Yogesh

Ramban (Jammu), Apr 15: Accusing Pakistan of orchestrating drug smuggling into Jammu and Kashmir to fund terrorism and destroy our young generation, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday called for a collective approach to end the menace.

Speaking at a public meeting here as part of the Drug-Free Jammu Kashmir campaign, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said, "Drug abuse isn't just a law & order issue but a social cancer requiring every part of society to fight."

"I urged for 'Whole of Government' and 'Whole of Society' approach. I believe when the government's strength and society's resolve act as one, then even the toughest challenges crumble," he added.



Intensifying the crusade against drug menace, the Lieutenant Governor led the Padyatra from District Police Line to District Administrative

Complex, Ramban. He was joined by public representatives, senior officials of civil and police administration; civil society members, religious leaders,

members of business and trade community; ex-servicemen; prominent citizens, various stakeholders, women, students, youth, and people from different walks of life in large number, who were gathered with resolve to eradicate drug addiction at its roots, transform the society, and secure our youth's future.

The Lieutenant Governor said for decades, Pakistan has orchestrated drug smuggling into Jammu Kashmir to fund terrorism and destroy our young generation. "We will map every hotspot. And I promise you: we will hit each one like a surgical strike. Not a single smuggler will be spared. The entire network will be dismantled," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted society's role in fight against drug menace and called for collective action.

"If the neighbour's house is on fire, yours is | More on P6

## INDIA bloc must decide joint response to delimitation bill: Omar Abdullah

- Flags 'bias' in past delimitation
- Pitches craft revival, new industrial policy
- Calls artisans 'true ambassadors'
- Refuses to cut tricolour ribbon

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Apr 15: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said the opposition INDIA bloc must collectively decide its response to the proposed delimitation-related parliamentary bill. He also launched a major craft promotion initiative at Kashmir Haat under the Soulful Kashmir campaign.

Speaking to reporters here, CM Abdullah, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said he will attend a meeting of the INDIA bloc in New Delhi at the residence of Mallikarjun Kharge to deliberate on a joint strategy.

"We cannot act alone. The INDIA bloc will have to



decide together what our response will be and what role we will play in Parliament, whether in the Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha," he said.

Raising concerns over past delimitation exercises, he alleged that constituency restructuring was carried out in a manner that benefited the BJP and its allies. "The way seats were distributed, constituencies carved, maps drawn and voters shifted, the purpose appeared to favour a particular political side," he said.

The CM added that if the proposed bill follows a similar pattern, it will require close scrutiny. "If it is meant to benefit a particular party rather than the common

voter, it has to be examined carefully. The opposition will deliberate collectively before taking a stand," he said.

He referred to key aspects of the proposed legislation, including a possible increase in Lok Sabha seats and provisions for women's representation.

Earlier, the Chief Minister inaugurated the 'Know Your Artisan' programme at Kashmir Haat under the Handicrafts and Handloom Department's 'Soulful Kashmir' initiative aimed at strengthening Brand Jammu & Kashmir and promoting its rich craft heritage.

On the occasion, he also inaugurated a GI Testing Lab, Giant | More on P6

## Day temps remain above normal, Sgr records 26.8°C, Jammu 35.4°C

MeT predicts light rain on April 17, 18

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Apr 15: The Meteorological Department on Wednesday said Jammu and Kashmir is expected to witness generally dry weather on April 16 with a brief spell of light rain or thundershower at a few places towards evening or night.

A MeT Department official while talking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Weather is likely to turn generally cloudy on April 17 and 18, with light rain or thundershower at many places during morning or forenoon hours. It said gusty winds with speeds of 40-50 kmph and hailstorm may occur at a few locations during this period."

"On April 19, scattered places

are likely to receive a brief spell of light rain or thundershower towards the afternoon, while the weather is expected to remain generally dry from April 20 to April 24," he said, adding, "As per the evening data, Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 26.8°C, which is 6.6°C above normal, and a minimum of 7.6°C. Qazigund registered a maximum of 26.3°C and a minimum of 5.4°C, while Pahalgam recorded 21.6°C and 2.8°C. Kupwara recorded a maximum of 25.2°C and a minimum of 5.2°C, and Kokernag reported 23.8°C and 7.0°C. Gulmarg recorded a maximum temperature of 17.6°C, which is 8.1°C above normal, and a minimum of 3.5°C. In the Jammu division, Jammu city recorded a maximum temperature of 35.4°C | More on P6

## J&K Assembly set for 6th delimitation if Parliament clears proposed bills

Past exercises held in 1957, 1966, 1975, 1995, 2022

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Apr 15: If Parliament approves the proposed legislations on the delimitation of Lok Sabha and State Assembly constituencies, the Jammu & Kashmir's Assembly seats will undergo delimitation for the sixth time.

According to official documents accessed by news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Assembly seats in Jammu & Kashmir have previously been delimited in 1957, 1966, 1975, 1995 and 2022.

In 1951, Jammu & Kashmir witnessed the carving out of 100 seats, including 25 seats for areas of the state under Pakistan's occupation. This arrangement underwent changes during the delimitation



exercises carried out in 1957, 1966, 1975, and 1995.

The last delimitation exercise in the erstwhile state was completed in 1995, based on the 1981 census, after deliberations that lasted seven years.

Before 2019, the delimitation of Assembly seats in Jammu &

Kashmir was governed by the Jammu & Kashmir Constitution and the Jammu & Kashmir Representation of Peoples Act, 1957, while the delimitation of parliamentary seats was governed by the Constitution of India.

The situation changed in 2019 with the | More on P6

## Admin orders Darbar Move

## Offices to reopen in Srinagar on May 4

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Apr 15: The administration on Wednesday ordered the annual 'Darbar Move', directing government offices to move from Jammu to Srinagar for the summer season.

An order issued by the General Administration Department, a copy of which is in the possession of the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), reads offices observing a five-day work schedule will close in Jammu on April 30, while those following a six-day week will shut on May 2. All departments will resume functioning in Srinagar from May 4.

The government has limited the staff strength for the move to 33 per cent of employees

or a maximum of 10 officials per office, the order reads. "Transport arrangements have been finalised, with the Jammu and Kashmir Road Transport Corporation set to operate buses for employees on May 1 and May 3. Advance ticket booking will begin from April 20."

To ensure smooth transit, each convoy will be backed by breakdown response systems, including cranes, standby buses and mobile workshops. Police will provide escorts and facilitate movement along key stretches of the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway.

The Health Department has been directed to establish medical aid facilities at multiple locations along the route, including Jhajar Kotli, Udhampur, Ramban and | More on P6

## Lok Bhavan J&K celebrates Foundation Day of Himachal Pradesh

India stands as rare treasure trove of pluralism: LG Sinha

KT News Desk

Jammu, Apr 15: Jammu Kashmir Lok Bhavan on Wednesday celebrated the Foundation Day of Himachal Pradesh, at Jammu. The cultural evening, celebrating the spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', was attended by students, senior officials, and the people of Himachal Pradesh living in the UT of Jammu & Kashmir, who were the special invitees on the occasion.

In his address, Lieutenant



Governor Manoj Sinha extended his heartiest greetings and best wishes to the people of Himachal Pradesh. "Cultural confluence on Himachal Diwas

builds the bedrock of a strong nation. When citizens and artists from varied states intertwine traditions, they weave intricate threads

## CM rededicates renovated War Memorial

Attends 78th Raising Day of JAK LI Regimental Centre, pays homage to fallen soldiers

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Apr 15: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday rededicated the renovated War Memorial and attended the 78th Raising Day celebrations of the Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry (JAK LI) Regimental Centre at Srinagar.

The programme was held at the Regimental Centre, where the Chief Minister, as Chief Guest, unveiled the renovated War Memorial and participated in a wreath-laying ceremony to pay homage to the brave soldiers who laid down their lives



in the service of the nation. The function was attended

by several distinguished dignitaries, including former J&K

Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, Colonel of the JAK LI Regiment Lt. Gen. Manish Erry, Chief of Staff 15 Corps Maj Gen Saurabh Sharma, GOC 31 Sub Area Maj Gen Abhijit Mitra, Commandant JAK LI Regimental Centre Srinagar Brig. Ved Beniwal and Officers of the Regiment.

The Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry Regiment, one of the most decorated regiments of the Indian Army, has a rich legacy of valour and sacrifice. Originating from the J&K Militia raised during the 1947 conflict,

## Visually impaired Zainab Bilal scores 95% in CBSE class 10 exams

Credits consistency; thanks parents, teachers at DPS Sgr, eyes career in IT

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Apr 15: Defying all odds with courage and consistency, a visually impaired girl from Srinagar has scripted an inspiring success story by securing 95 per cent marks in the recently declared CBSE class 10 examinations, proving that determination knows no barriers.

Zainab Bilal, a completely visually impaired student from Badshah Nagar, Natipora in Srinagar, scored 475 out of 500, emerging as a beacon of hope and inspiration for



students, especially those facing physical challenges. Speaking to the news

agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) at her residence, Zainab said she had

expected a decent result but was overwhelmed by her performance.

"My expectation was that the result would be good, but Alhamdulillah, my marks are very good. To be honest, I did not think much about scoring this high as CBSE papers are quite difficult," she said.

Expressing gratitude, she credited her parents, teachers and school administration for their unwavering support throughout her academic journey.

"My parents have been my biggest supporters. My mother, father | More on P6

## Northern Rly announces Budgam-Delhi parcel train service from Apr 17 to May 31

23-hour service to be made permanent if good response

Naveed Ul Haq Ganaie

Budgam, Apr 15: In a significant move to ease transportation of goods from Kashmir Valley, Northern Railway's Jammu Division has announced the operation of a dedicated parcel train service between Budgam and Delhi from April 17 to May 31.

The service, named 'Joint Parcel Product - Rapid Cargo

Service' (JPP-RCS) will run between Adarsh Nagar, Delhi and Budgam, primarily aimed at benefiting fruit growers, traders and handicraft dealers.

Officials informed the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the train from Budgam will depart at 6:15 AM and reach Adarsh Nagar, Delhi, at 5:00 AM the following day. On its return journey, the train will leave Delhi at 5:00 AM and arrive in Budgam at 10:45 AM the next day.

The train will comprise eight parcel vans and one seating-cum-luggage | More on P6

## Consultative meeting on school safety regulations begins at JKBOSE

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Apr 15: A two-day consultative meeting for the formulation of regulations of the Jammu and Kashmir School Standards and Safety Authority (JKSSSA) commenced here on Wednesday at JKBOSE, Srinagar.

The meeting was attended by key stakeholders, subject experts, and representatives from NIEPA, New Delhi, the School Education Department, JKSCERT, Higher Education Department, Universities of the UT and Administration. | More on P6

## 30K posts referred, 15K youth recruited in J&K since last year: Deputy CM

### Lays foundation stone for Kunzar-Hardshoora road, addresses public gathering at Kunzar

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, APRIL 15: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, Wednesday said that the government is prioritising employment generation, having referred nearly 30,000 posts and facilitated recruitment of around 15,000 through various agencies over the past year in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, informed this while addressing a large public gathering at Kunzar in the Gulmarg constituency.

He was accompanied by Advisor to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Gulmarg Peerzada Farooq Ahmad Shah and senior officers.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Chief Minister reiterated the government's commitment towards creating sustainable employment opportunities for the youth. He emphasized that thousands of vacancies have been referred and filled on merit through recruitment agencies, reflecting the administration's focused efforts towards employment generation in J&K.

On the occasion, the Deputy Chief Minister felicitated the beneficiaries under Mission Yuva scheme and distributed sanction letters, cheques and keys of commercial vehicles



among them. He highlighted that the government is actively strengthening the self-employment ecosystem under Mission Yuva, enabling youth to establish successful business ventures and generate further employment opportunities.

During his address, he also underlined the importance of labour cards and urged people to register themselves to avail benefits such as educational scholarships, financial assistance for specially-abled

individuals, and other welfare schemes.

Earlier, the Deputy Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for upgradation of Kunzar-Hardshoora Road in Kunzar.

He stated that several road projects in Kunzar and other areas of the Gulmarg constituency were completed last year under NABARD, PMGSY and other schemes while many more are underway this year to further strengthen connectivity in the region.

Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani

and MLA Peerzada Farooq Ahmad Shah also addressed the gathering and reaffirmed the government's commitment to infrastructure development and youth empowerment across Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier in the day, the Deputy Chief Minister, accompanied by MLA Tanvir Sadiq, paid obeisance at Gurdwara Damdama Sahib in HMT, Srinagar and appreciated the shrine's significance as an important spiritual center for devotees.

## CS reviews process for establishment of KVs/JNVs across J&K



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, APRIL 15: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Wednesday chaired a meeting to review the availability of land and infrastructure for Central Government educational institutions, including Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) and Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs), that are either non-functional or presently operating from temporary premises across various districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Commissioner Secretary, School Education Department; Secretary, Revenue; Deputy Commissioners representing Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (JNV) and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS); Director School Education, Jammu/Kashmir; Regional Officer, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Jammu, besides other senior officers.

Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners from the districts participated through video conferencing.

During the review, the Chief Secretary sought detailed district-wise and institution-wise

inputs regarding the current infrastructural status of these schools. He specifically enquired about the identification and availability of suitable land for construction of permanent school buildings and the arrangements made for their temporary functioning till such infrastructure is developed.

Emphasizing timely action, the Chief Secretary directed the Revenue Department to expedite the transfer of identified land parcels to the School Education Department for further leasing to the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan to facilitate early execution of works. He stressed prioritization of districts where no KV or JNV presently exists and called for immediate commencement of academic activities in locations where temporary accommodation has already been identified.

Commissioner Secretary, School Education Department, Ram Niwas Sharma, apprised the meeting of the current status of each JNV and KV, highlighting specific requirements of land and infrastructure. He informed that out of 51 Kendriya Vidyalayas sanctioned for districts of J&K, 37 are already functional, while 14 are in the process of establishment. Of

these, three schools including two at Ramban and Gool in district Ramban, and one at Ramkot in Kathuadistrict are expected to become functional shortly.

Moreover, he informed that 21 Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas have been sanctioned for the Union Territory, out of which 20 are already functional from their own buildings. He added that the JNV for Srinagar district is proposed to be made functional in a building identified by the district administration, while permanent infrastructure will subsequently be developed at a suitable site to be identified for the institution.

He further informed that the remaining 11 KVs are also in advanced stages of establishment, with land identified and temporary accommodation finalized, and formal transfer processes underway. The locations include Vijaypur (Samba), Bani and Ramkot (Kathua), Panchari (Udhampur), Mughal Maidan and Nagseni (Kishtwar), Gool and Ramban (Ramban), Kakiyari and Katra (Reasi), Gulpur (Poonch), Drugmulla (Kupwara), and Ratnipora and Chandhara in Pulwama district.

## DC Srinagar launches revamped official district website

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR APRIL 15: In a step towards strengthening digital governance and enhancing public service related transparency & information sharing, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, Wednesday formally launched the revamped Official website of District Srinagar here at Conference Hall of the DC Office.

The upgraded digital platform has been designed to provide a more user-friendly, accessible and efficient interface for citizens, ensuring seamless access to government services, information, and updates.

The initiative reflects the District Administration's continued commitment to leveraging technology for transparent, accountable, and citizen-centric governance.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, emphasized that the revamped website marks an attempt in improving communication between the administration and the public. He highlighted that the platform has been redesigned with improved navigation, better-organized content and enhanced readability, enabling citizens to easily access key services and vital information.

He further stated that the



integration of real-time updates, including social media feeds, will ensure timely dissemination of information and keep the public informed about government initiatives, programs and district-level developments.

Underscoring the importance of sustainability and relevance of digital platforms, the DC stressed the need for regular updates and continuous improvements based on user feedback. He encouraged departments to actively contribute to maintaining the platform as a dynamic and responsive information hub.

The DC also appreciated the efforts of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) District Srinagar led by DIO, Shahnaz Nayeem and ADIO,

Syed Mujadid and their entire team for their dedicated work in upgrading and modernizing the website. He urged them to continue innovating and developing more digital solutions aimed at improving governance and service delivery.

The event also saw participation of Additional District Development Commissioner Rifat Aftab Qureshi, Additional Deputy Commissioner Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Chief Planning Officer Fayaz Ahmad Dar, SDM West Irfan Bahadur, SDM East Zubair Ahmad, Assistant Commissioner Revenue Umar Gulzar, District Informatics Officer (NIC) Shahnaz Nayeem, ADIO Syed Mujadid and other Officers.

## Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam: IGNOU Srinagar organises students' discussion

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, April 15: The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) Regional Centre Srinagar organised an online Students' Discussion Forum on the theme Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam to create awareness among learners about women's empowerment and constitutional provisions for enhancing their political representation.

The programme, as per a PIB statement, was conducted in an interactive format featuring expert presentations followed by a question-and-answer session. The discussions were facilitated through multimedia presentations and real-time engagement to encourage participation and exchange of ideas.

The event witnessed participation from students, academic counsellors, coordinators, college principals from various government colleges in the Valley, and officers and staff of the

Regional Centre.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Amina Parveen, Head, Department of Education, University of Kashmir, and Dr. Shabnam Ara, Head, Department of Sociology, Amar Singh College Srinagar, highlighted the issue of underrepresentation of women in legislative bodies such as the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. They underlined the importance of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam in addressing gender gaps and enhancing women's participation in governance, while also discussing socio-cultural and structural challenges faced by women.

During the deliberations, participants emphasised the need to strengthen awareness among students regarding women's political rights and to utilise educational institutions as platforms for sensitisation on gender issues. The importance of capacity-building initiatives to equip women for leadership roles and active participation in governance was also highlighted.

**UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR**

## OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEV. PROJECT OFFICER POSHAN PROJECT KULGAM

Phone No: 01931-469324 Email: cdpo-Poshankulgam@jk.gov.in

Subject: - Provisional Merit Cum Tentative Selection List of the Candidates applied for Honorary Post Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers) in Anganwadi Centre's of POSHAN Project Kulgam and inviting of Objections thereof.

**Notification No:01-CDPO (K) of 2026**  
**Dated: 13.04.2026**

In pursuance to the Government Order No.103-JK (SWD) of 2023 Dated: 28.04.2023, and approval of Mission Director Poshan J&K vide endorsement No: MP/Poshan/47205-12 Dated: 24.12.2025 an advertisement Notice was issued vide Notification No: 07 CDPO (K) of 2026 Dated: 06.01.2026 with opening date of receipt of application forms as 06.01.2026 and closing date is 21.01.2026 for merit list of 03Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers) for 03 AW Centre's of POSHAN Project Kulgam. The merit list of the candidates has been prepared as per the criteria laid down vide Government Order No.103-JK (SWD) of 2023 Dated: 28.04.2023 and accordingly Provisional merit list has been framed for 03 AWC's under Panchayat Ward at Annexure-A and Tentative selection List at Annexure-B, are hereby published for information of public in general and candidates for filing of objections if any. The objection if any against the Provisional Merit List shall be filed in the Office of the Child Development Project Officer POSHAN Kulgam against proper receipt within 10 days (in office hours) from the date of publication of this notification. No objection/appeal shall be entertained after expiry of last date of filing objections.

No: CDPO/POSHAN/KGM/Estt-2026/  
Dated: .04.2026

Child Dev. Project Officer,  
Poshan Project Kulgam  
(Member Secretary)

(Annexure-A) Provisional Merit List of Sanginis (AWW) (Nursinpora Ward No:04)									
S. No	Name of the Candidate	Parentage	D.O. B	Academic (12 <sup>th</sup> )			Adl. 2 percent points if any	Total Weightage	
				M. Marks	Marks Obt	%age			
1.	Afsana Dilawar	D/O Late Dilawar Ahmad Khan	14.04.2007	500	408	81.60	No	81.60	
2.	Gazala Jan	D/O Gulam Nabi Ganie	03.11.2004	500	377	75.40	No	75.40	
3.	Shugufta Ali	W/O Abid Hussain Dar	10.11.1991	750	542	72.26	No	72.26	
4.	Saby Nazir	D/O Nazir Ahmad Dar	22.08.2003	500	347	69.40	No	69.40	

Provisional Merit List of Sanginis (AWW) (Khandipora Ward No:04)									
S. No	Name of the Candidate	Parentage	D.O. B	Academic (12 <sup>th</sup> )			Adl. 2 percent points if any	Total Weight age	
				M. Marks	Marks Obt	%age			
1.	Mehnaz Mubark	D/O Mubark Ahmad sofi	05.03.2004	500	406	81.20	No	81.20	
2.	Uzma Jan	D/O Mohammad Ismail Naikoo	07.02.2000	500	394	78.80	No	78.80	
3.	Yasmeena Amin	D/O Mohammad Amin Itoo	05.03.1999	500	332	66.40	No	66.40	
4.	Rohee Jan	W/O Rayees Ahmad Lone	25.02.1992	750	392	52.26	No	52.26	
5.	Yasmeena Akhter	W/O Abdul Bari Itoo	05.01.1991	750	335	44.66	No	44.66	

Provisional Merit List of Sanginis (AWW) (Larkipora (MC) Kulgam Ward No:06)									
S. No	Name of the Candidate	Parentage	D.O. B	Academic (12 <sup>th</sup> )			Adl. 2 percent points if any	Total Weight age	
				M. Marks	Marks Obt	%Age			
1.	Aneesa Gulzar	D/O Gulzar Ahmad Bhat	10.02.2004	500	450	90.00	No	90.00	
2.	Fatima Ashiq	D/O Ashiq Hussain Peer	05.07.2007	500	418	83.60	No	83.60	
3.	Sabreena Iqbal	D/O Iqbal Hussain Bandy	16.04.2005	500	399	79.80	No	79.80	
4.	Taqvee Shareef	D/O Shareef Din Teeli	03.05.2004	500	385	77.00	No	77.00	
5.	Shufalia Mashooq	D/O Mashooq Ahmad Ahanger	01.01.1998	500	378	75.60	No	75.60	
6.	Aaisha Shafi	D/O Mohammad Shafi RATHER	18.07.2005	500	320	64.00	No	64.00	
7.	Fozia Gulam	W/O Rahil Shafi	04.01.1989	500	308	61.60	No	61.60	
8.	Rubeena Kouser	W/O Tanveer Ahmad Reshi	12.10.1992	750	344	45.86	No	45.86	

(Annexure-B) Tentative Selection List									
S. No	Name of the Candidate	Parentage	D.O. B	Academic (12 <sup>th</sup> )			Adl. 2 percent points if any	Total Weightage	
				M. Marks	Marks Obt	%age			
1.	Afsana Dilawar	D/O Late Dilawar Ahmad Khan	14.04.2007	500	408	81.60	No	81.60	
2.	Mehnaz Mubark	D/O Mubark Ahmad sofi	05.03.2004	500	406	81.20	No	81.20	
3.	Aneesa Gulzar	D/O Gulzar Ahmad Bhat	10.02.2004	500	450	90.00	No	90.00	

DIPK-403/26      DATED: 15-04-2026

## CS charts action plan for '100-Day Nasha Mukht J&K' campaign

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Apr 15: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting to review the implementation of the UT-wide '100 Days Nasha Mukht J&K' campaign, which was kickstarted by the Lieutenant Governor on April 11 from MA Stadium, Jammu.

The meeting was attended by all Administrative Secretaries designated as District Mentors by the Government, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu/Kashmir, Director, Information; Director, School Education, Jammu/Kashmir; HoDs from Social Welfare and Health Departments along with Deputy Commissioners of all districts.

Emphasizing the importance of the initiative, the Chief Secretary called upon all stakeholders to transform the campaign into a mass movement reaching every household across Jammu and Kashmir. He underscored the need for a robust and result-oriented implementation plan to be prepared by each department and district for execution during the three-month campaign period.

Taking a detailed review, the Chief Secretary sought inputs from each District Mentor and Deputy Commissioner regarding their respective calendars of activities planned during the campaign. He directed that all Panchayats and Urban Local Body wards must be covered to ensure no area remains untouched.

Highlighting the need to make the campaign outcome-driven, he directed that data generated during these 100 days be distinctly captured on the 'Nasha Mukht J&K' portal of the Information Department. He asked the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) to



handhold the districts in uploading and maintaining real-time data. He stressed that measurable outcomes such as number of people reached, victims counselled, treated or rehabilitated, and action taken against drug peddlers must be systematically recorded and showcased.

The Chief Secretary further directed key departments including Health, Social Welfare and Home to intensify their efforts during this period and work towards achieving quantifiable targets. He also called for a comprehensive review of all Drug De-Addiction Centres to assess availability of facilities and ensure adherence to prescribed norms and standards.

Principal Secretary, Home, Chandrakar Bharti, emphasized strengthening enforcement alongside Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities. He highlighted the need to popularize the Tele-MANAS helpline among affected individuals and proposed its integration with the emergency response number 112 for centralized monitoring.

He also encouraged citizens to report drug-related activities, assuring that their identities would be kept confidential.

He further stressed adherence to directions issued during UT-level NCORD meetings and asked districts to regularly review their implementation during the campaign. He informed that all such directions would be shared with District Mentors and field functionaries for effective execution. Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare Department, Sarhad Hafeez, presented a detailed overview of the three-month campaign, which commenced with a 'Padh Yatra' led by the Lieutenant Governor. He informed that the campaign aims to reach every district through extensive awareness and mobilization programmes. Departments have been directed to prepare specific action plans with a focus on participation of students and youth, NCC/NSS volunteers, NYKs, Scouts and Guides, PRIs and elected representatives, he added. He further informed that a key component of the campaign involves intensified action

by law enforcement agencies against drug trafficking networks in a mission mode. Elaborating on the guidelines, he stated that districts will identify and refer drug abuse victims to Drug De-Addiction Centres and Addiction Treatment Facilities in coordination with the Health Department, while also engaging influencers, sportspersons and youth icons for awareness generation.

The campaign will focus on youth mobilization, hotspot interventions, and activities at schools, colleges, Panchayats and urban wards. Wide publicity will be ensured through print, electronic and social media in coordination with the Information Department. He also informed that each district will nominate a nodal officer for coordination, monitoring and reporting. A robust daily reporting mechanism will be established with uploading of reports, photographs and videos on the 'Nasha Mukht J&K' portal to ensure comprehensive coverage of all Panchayats and wards without exception.

## LG Sinha, staff give warm send-off to two key officers



KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Apr 15: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and the staff & officers of Lok Bhavan on Wednesday accorded a warm farewell to outgoing Special Secretary, Vaibhav Kohli, and Aide-de-Camp (ADC) to

the Lieutenant Governor, Shri Ravinder Singh.

The Lieutenant Governor felicitated the outgoing officers and expressed his appreciation for their dedication and professional integrity. He wished them good health and success in future assignments.

## Satish Sharma reviews petroleum supply chain Vows zero tolerance for hoarding

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Apr 15: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports, Satish Sharma on Wednesday chaired a meeting to review the supply and distribution of petroleum products, with emphasis on operations managed by the Indian Oil Corporation.

During the meeting held at Narwal office of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the Minister had a comprehensive review of the current availability of petroleum products, supply chain logistics and distribution mechanisms across various districts. He emphasized the need for maintaining uninterrupted supply and directed the officials to ensure close coordination with the oil companies for adequate stock level and timely replenishment.

Highlighting the importance of balanced



distribution, Satish Sharma called for rationalisation of petroleum allocation to ensure equitable availability across all regions. He stressed that no area should face scarcity and that supply must be aligned with actual demand patterns to avoid shortages or regional imbalances.

The Minister also made it clear that there will be zero tolerance for hoarding, cautioning that strict action will be taken

against any malpractice that disrupts fair supply.

The Minister instructed the officials to establish a robust monitoring system and maintain regular oversight to address any emerging challenges promptly. Reiterating the government's commitment, he said that ensuring seamless availability of essential commodities remains a top priority to safeguard public convenience. Following the meeting,

the Minister visited the plant site where he inspected the bottling process and reviewed on-ground operations. He also directed the authorities to upgrade facilities for the labour workforce at the plant, emphasizing the need for improved working conditions and welfare measures.

Senior officials from the concerned departments and representatives of oil companies were present during the meeting.

## Violence in name of religion won't be tolerated: Dy CM



WARIS FAYAZ

Baramulla, Apr 15: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary on Wednesday said that violence in the name of religion or caste will not be tolerated in Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking to reporters in Kunzer, the Deputy CM said recent incidents of violence are deeply concerning and must not be allowed to disrupt the social fabric of the region. "Jammu and Kashmir is known for harmony, not lawlessness. Such acts raise serious questions and cannot be accepted," he said.

Referring to the killing of a child, he termed the incident as tragic and said justice must be delivered at the earliest. "The loss of a child cannot be compensated. Those involved must be given strict punishment. We expect the police to act firmly," he said.

The Deputy Chief Minister expressed hope that such incidents would not be repeated in the future and said it should serve as a wake-up call to maintain peace and unity.

Taking a dig at the BJP, he alleged that during its tenure benefits were extended to select sections and land was allotted to big hotels. He said such decisions should be examined.

He said the National Conference has always stood with the poor, farmers and labourers and remains committed to addressing public issues—(KNO)

## Dr Farooq advocates peace over war

REHAN QAYOUM MIR

Srinagar, Apr 15: National Conference President and former J&K Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah on Wednesday said that wars only lead to destruction and urged neighbouring countries to understand that lasting peace is the only way forward.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony of the renovated War Memorial at the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAKLI) regiment at Rangreth here, Dr Farooq recalled his childhood memories following early conflicts in the region.

"When I was a child, after the attack, the militia was formed. The militia commander was Brigadier Balamoria. I remember that time," he said.

Dr Farooq said the militia later transformed into a full-fledged army unit and performed successfully in every field. "It is a matter of pride for us that Jammu and Kashmir has such an army which protects us and does good work for us," he added.



Dr Farooq said he felt honoured to witness the memorial's legacy across generations. "The first memorial was built by my father. When the second memorial was built, I came. Today, it is Allah's blessing that my son is here as this memorial is being inaugurated," he said.

Praying for the success of the security forces, he said, "May Allah give success to this unit in every field and save us from wars. May Allah bring peace to the whole world."

Urging an end to hostilities, he said, "May Allah make our neighbours understand that nothing is achieved through conflict. Fighting brings destruction. It has been a long time, now let it go so we can live and prosper."—(KNO)

## Peak power need plunges 17% in J&K, Ladakh in February

REHAN QAYOUM MIR

Srinagar, Apr 15: Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have recorded a negative variation of over 17 percent in power requirement in the month of February during peak hours.

According to the official documents showing the anticipated power supply position v/s actual power supply position (Provisional) of Northern Region during the month of February-2026 states that in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh it has anticipated power requirement of 2020 Million Units (MUs) and availability of 1661 MUs respectively.

The official figures reveal that there was a variation of 17.8 percent in power requirement. It also said that NRPC had anticipated power availability of 980 MUs against the 1660 MUs of actual availability.

Earlier this news agency reported that in the peak winters of 2025-2026, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were utilising nearly 1,000 Megawatts (MWs) of coal and gas energy amid dip in hydel power



generation.

The official figures available in this regard revealed that in the month of January-2026, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were utilizing 999.21 MWs of thermal energy including 870.14 MWs of coal and 129.7 MWs of gas energy from the allocated shares in joint and central sector utilities.

The figures reveal that Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were allocated with a total of 3767.44 MWs of power from state, private and central share out of which 999.21 MWs were thermal energy and 2673.1 MWs were from the renewable

energy.

It also said that out of the total allocated energy, the regions were utilizing 95.13 MWs of nuclear and 1115.88 MWs of hydel energy.

Pertinently, as already reported by KNO, Jammu and Kashmir was importing more than 95 percent of its electricity in the month of December.

The officials earlier in the month had informed that Jammu and Kashmir is importing electricity ranging from 2900 MWs to 3100 MWs during the peak hours.

Continued on [www.kashmirthunder.in](http://www.kashmirthunder.in)

## Police arrest 17 drug peddlers

IGP chairs meeting, directs officers to intensify anti-narcotics operations

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Apr 15: As part of the ongoing "Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan," Police on Wednesday arrested 17 alleged drug peddlers in multiple operations across South and Central Kashmir, attached and froze properties worth over Rs 2.5 crore linked to narcotics trade. It also cancelled a driving licence in an NDPS case, and conducted awareness programmes.

The arrests were made in Anantnag, Shopian, Budgam and Kulgam, with significant quantities of contraband substances including charas, heroin, cannabis and poppy straw were recovered during



raids and naka checking.

An official said, "In Anantnag, police seized over 6.6 kg of charas during a raid in Srigulwara, while smaller quantities were recovered in separate naka checks at Larnoo, Pahalgam and Sangam, leading to multiple arrests. In Shopian, one person was held with around 120 grams of

charas-like substance during checking in Keller." "In Budgam, two persons were arrested in Magam after over 1.1 kg of semi-grinded charas-like substance was recovered from their possession," he added.

The official said, "Kulgam district saw the highest number of arrests, with 10 alleged peddlers held in separate operations.

Police said heroin, charas, cannabis and poppy straw were seized at multiple checkpoints, including Khudwani, Qaimoh, Qazigund and Devsar, while poppy cultivation on a large patch of land in Sopat village was also destroyed. As part of financial investigations into drug trafficking, police in Shopian attached a double-storey residential house valued at 25.8 lakh, allegedly acquired through proceeds of narcotics trade. In Anantnag, four residential properties worth around 2.25 crore were frozen under provisions of the NDPS Act in connection with ongoing investigations.

Continued on [www.kashmirthunder.in](http://www.kashmirthunder.in)

## EDITORIAL

### A Transformative Leap For Chenab Valley

The Centre's approval of two mega tunnel projects on National Highway-244 is a lifeline for the people of Doda, Kishtwar, and Udhampur. The two tunnels will cost an estimated 9,779.42 crore rupees. The Sudhmahadev-Dranga tunnel will be 12.85 kilometres long, and the Singhpora-Vailoo tunnel will stretch 38.61 kilometres. Together, they will change how people travel across some of the most difficult and weather-prone areas of Jammu and Kashmir, which have been neglected for far too long. This is

a truly historic moment. The Union government, especially Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, deserve full appreciation for prioritising the integration of this region with the rest of the country. The benefits of these tunnels cannot be overstated. Stretching over 50 kilometres in total, they will provide smooth, all-weather connectivity between the Chenab Valley and South Kashmir. For decades, residents have suffered immensely every winter and during bad weather, when road closures left them cut

off from essential services, markets, and opportunities. A journey that once took hours of dangerous driving will now become much shorter. This will save time, fuel, and most importantly, lives. The economic impact will be equally transformative. The Chenab Valley is naturally beautiful, rich in culture, and full of tourism potential that remains untapped. Poor connectivity has kept this potential hidden for years. With these tunnels, goods will move faster, trade will grow, and tourists will finally be able to reach the region's unexplored

landscapes reliably. Local businesses, artisans, and farmers will find bigger markets for their products. Healthcare and education, which once felt like distant dreams during winter months, will become accessible throughout the year. The quality of life for residents will improve beyond measure. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has rightly expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister and the Union Minister. His earlier intervention, when he wrote to the Centre highlighting delays and seeking urgent action, shows how cooperative federalism

can work when the Centre responds quickly. The people of Chenab Valley have waited long enough. Now, with the revival and advancement of these projects, that wait is finally ending. Tunnels are not just roads through mountains. They are bridges to opportunity, lifelines to services, and carriers of hope. The Centre has done its part. Now the responsibility lies with the agencies that will build these tunnels to complete them on time. The Chenab Valley is watching. And for the first time in decades, it is watching with hope.

# From Steam To Speed: The Ever-Evolving Journey Of Railways

## Press Information Bureau

The sound of a steam engine changed the course of history in India 173 years ago. As the first passenger train rolled from Bombay to Thane in 1853, it carried not just passengers, but the promise of a new era of movement and connectivity. In the years that followed, railways spread rapidly across cities, towns, and villages, connecting people, goods, and ideas like never before. Steam engines gave way to diesel locomotives, and eventually to electric trains that were faster, cleaner, and more efficient. Over time, railway stations evolved from basic platforms into bustling centers of activity. Each new technological advancement built upon the achievements of the past, steadily improving speed, safety, and comfort for millions of passengers. What began as a slow and experimental course soon grew into one of the largest railway networks in the world.

Today, that journey continues to gather momentum as Indian Railways sets new benchmarks in both passenger and freight operations. In 2025-26, the railways carried a notable 741 crore passengers, reflecting the scale at which it serves the nation every day. During the same period, total revenue reached approximately 80,000 crore, while freight movement touched a record 1,670 million tonnes (MT). These achievements highlight how railways have evolved from a pioneering transport system into a vital engine of economic growth. It also serves as the backbone of the country's logistics network along with providing safe, reliable, and accessible mobility to millions across India.

### The Beginning of Railways in India

The introduction of railways in India began with a historic event on 16th April, 1853, when the first passenger train operated between Bombay (now Mumbai) and Thane. The occasion was considered so significant that the day was declared a public holiday in Bombay, allowing citizens to witness the inauguration of this new mode of transportation. Large crowds gathered at Bori Bunder station.

Approximately 400 passengers boarded the train for the inaugural run. The train consisted of 14 passenger carriages operated by the Great Indian Peninsula Railway (GIPR) and was pulled by a steam locomotive named Falkland. The departure was accompanied by a ceremonial 21-gun salute, symbolizing the beginning of railway transport in India.

The train successfully completed its journey of about 34-35 kilometres, demonstrating the practical potential of railways for passenger movement. This event marked the foundation of the Indian railway system and initiated a period of rapid railway expansion across the country.

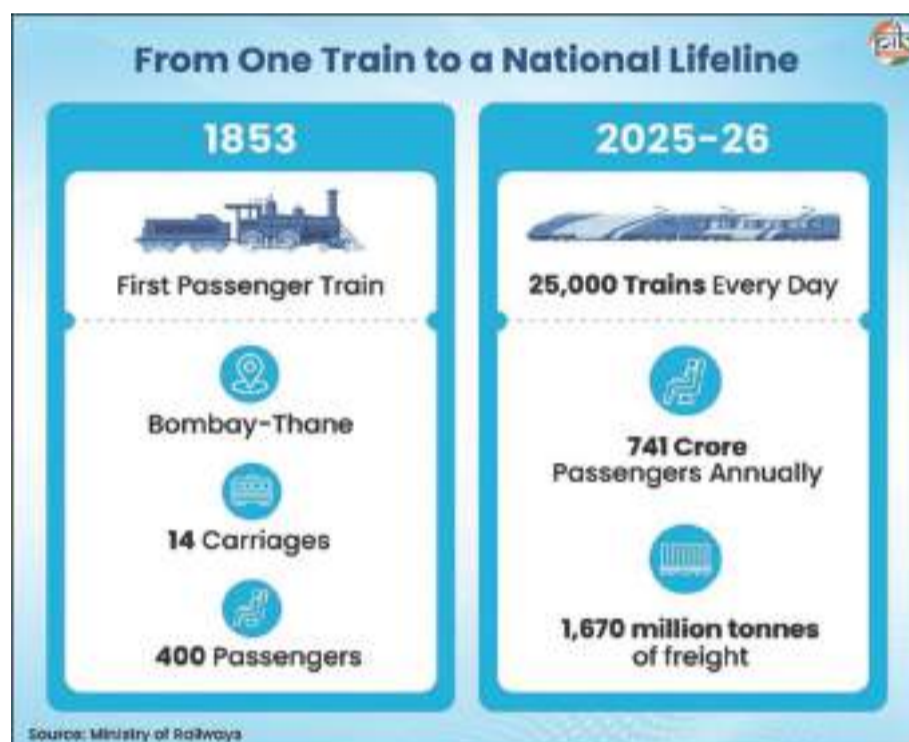
### Rise of the Railway Network in the Steam Era

Following the introduction of the first passenger train, Indian Railways entered a period of rapid expansion driven by steam locomotive technology. The railway system grew quickly across regions, transforming from a single experimental route into a large transport network. By 1880, the railway system had developed a route mileage of about 9,000 miles (approximately 14,500 kilometres), demonstrating the rapid growth of railway infrastructure.

Depending upon the gauge, Indian Railways has the following categories of track:

- Broad Gauge - 1.6 metre
- Metre Gauge - 1 metre
- Narrow Gauge - 0.76 metre and 0.6 metre
- Standard Gauge - 1.43 metre

One of the important operational developments during the steam era was the adoption of different railway gauges to support extension in diverse geographical conditions. The clear minimum distance between the running faces of the two rails is called Gauge. In 1871, metre gauge was officially adopted as the second standard gauge in India, following the earlier use of the 5 ft 6 inches (1.6 metre) broad gauge for the first railway lines. For developing poor areas and for bringing merchandise to the main railways, gauges even



narrower than the metre gauge were used.

Alongside this expansion, railway engineering also advanced significantly, particularly through the construction of specialized rail systems in challenging terrain. A major milestone was the opening of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in 1881. It connected the plains of West Bengal at New Jalpaiguri with Darjeeling. This demonstrated innovative engineering solutions for mountain transport and improved connectivity to hill regions. Another substantial technological milestone was the development of indigenous manufacturing capability. In 1895, the first steam locomotive built in India was produced at the Ajmer Workshop of the Rajputana Malwa Railway. This represented an important step towards domestic railway engineering and maintenance capability.

### The first steam loco No. F-734 of the Rajputana Malwa Railway

By the end of the nineteenth century, steam locomotives had enabled long-distance travel, large-scale freight movement, and nationwide connectivity. These developments established the engineering, operational, and administrative foundations that allowed Indian Railways to evolve.

During the twentieth century, railway systems around the world gradually began replacing steam locomotives with more efficient forms of traction. In India, the transition towards electric traction began in 1925, when the country's first electric train operated between Bombay Victoria Terminus and Kurla Harbour. This was a major step towards modernization, enabling faster acceleration and reduced dependence on steam locomotives. Progress in electrification remained gradual in the following decades.

1947: After Independence, India inherited a railway network that required major improvement; routes were reorganized and new lines were constructed to strengthen connectivity between major cities, and Indian Railways was formed by combining 42 railway systems, including those of former princely states.

1952: The railway network was reorganized into six administrative zones to improve efficiency and management, while coal and diesel locomotives continued to dominate railway operations during this period. 1985: Steam locomotives were gradually phased out, and railway operations increasingly shifted to more efficient diesel and electric locomotives, marking an important stage in the modernization of the railway system.

By the closing decades of the twentieth century, the railway system had established a strong operational base capable of supporting larger volumes of passengers and freight. This period set the stage for a new phase of development focused not only on expanding the network but also on improving speed, safety, efficiency, and passenger services.

### The Modern Era of Indian Railways

Entering the twenty-first century, Indian Railways began adopting upgraded technologies and infrastructure upgrades at a faster pace. It has witnessed progress in areas such as electrification, modern train design, safety systems, station redevelopment, and digital services. These developments reflect a shift from expansion to modernization, with a stronger focus on sustainability, passenger comfort, operational efficiency, and seamless connectivity.

### Railway Electrification

Over the last decade, the electrification of railway lines has accelerated at an unprecedented pace. Before 2014, only about 20 percent of India's railway network was electrified. This limited operational efficiency and increased reliance on diesel fuel. Today, the transformation is nearly complete, with 99.6% railway network electrified out of the total 70,142 broad gauge route kilometers. The expansion has been significant in scale. 69,873 route kilometers (rkm) have been electrified as of March 2026, increasing from 21,801 rkm in 2014.

The shift to electric traction has produced measurable benefits for the nation's energy economy. Most notably:

Railway electrification saved approximately 180 crore litres of diesel in 2024-25, reducing the need for crude oil imports.

Electric traction is environment friendly and about 70% more economical than diesel traction.

Electrification has resulted in savings of approximately 6,000 crore, with diesel consumption steadily declining.

This places India ahead of several major rail networks worldwide. The country's electrification levels are higher than those in the UK (39%), Russia (52%), and China (82%).

Track Renewal and Speed Enhancement  
Track infrastructure has witnessed strategic strengthening over the past decade.

A total of 54,600 kilometres of railway tracks were renewed during 2014-26, improving reliability and operational performance. The length of track capable of supporting speeds of 110 kmph and above increased from 31,445 kilometres (40% of the network) in 2014 to over 85,000 kilometres (over 80% of the network) as of February 2026. This has enabled faster and more efficient train operations.

Expansion of Passenger Reach Through Modern Train Services

### The Vande Bharat Network

Indian Railways has enhanced passenger travel through the introduction and expansion of the Vande Bharat Express. It is India's first indigenously designed

and manufactured semi-high-speed train. Launched in February 2019, the service represents a major step towards modern, comfortable, and technology-driven rail travel under the Make in India initiative.

Approximately 3.98 crore passengers travelled on the Vande Bharat Express network in FY 2025-26, demonstrating strong growth in passenger usage.

Since its inception, the Vande Bharat Express has carried over 9.1 crore passengers through 1 lakh trips.

The Vande Bharat Sleeper service, launched in January 2026, carried 1.21 lakh passengers across 119 trips in its first three months of operation.

### Amrit Bharat Express

To provide affordable transportation for low- and middle-income families, Indian Railways has introduced the Amrit Bharat Express. They are a new generation of fully non-AC modern trains designed to improve comfort and safety while maintaining economical travel options. These trains consist of 11 General Class coaches, 8 Sleeper Class coaches, 1 Pantry Car, and 2 Luggage-cum-Divyangjan coaches. This ensures adequate facilities for passengers across different travel needs. As of 18th March 2026, a total of 60 Amrit Bharat Express services are being operated across the Indian Railways network.

### Development of High-Speed Rail in India

The Union Budget 2026-27 allocated a record capital outlay of 2,78,000 crore for Indian Railways, the highest ever in the history of the sector. This highlights the strategic importance accorded to rail development. As part of this vision, the development of seven high-speed rail corridors has been announced as growth connectors. These corridors are intended to integrate major cities and regions, facilitate efficient movement of people, and support economic interaction across states. Proposed routes include Mumbai-Pune, Delhi-Varanasi, and Hyderabad-Bengaluru, among others. Together, these planned corridors span nearly 4,000 kilometres.

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (MAHSR) Corridor represents India's first concrete step towards introducing high-speed rail systems in the country. Conceived as a dedicated high-speed passenger corridor, it covers a total length of approximately 508 kilometres. The corridor has been designed for high-speed operations at a maximum speed of 320 kilometres per hour.

These developments signal India's transition into the era of high-speed rail, setting the foundation for faster and more efficient inter-city travel.

### Strengthening Digital Infrastructure and Passenger Safety

Indian Railways has strengthened its telecom and digital infrastructure to enhance safety, operational efficiency, and passenger services. The adoption of advanced technologies and integrated communication systems during the year 2025-2026 marks a significant step toward building a digitally connected railway network.

Unified Telecom Backbone Infrastructure: Railways have upgraded the telecom backbone through Internet Protocol Multi-Protocol Label Switching (IP MPLS) technology to support high-capacity, mission-critical railway applications. The system enables centralized video surveillance and supports core operational systems such as Mobile Train Radio Communication (MTRC), Passenger Reservation System (PRS), Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA), etc. The IP MPLS network has been successfully commissioned at 1,396 railway stations, strengthening the foundation for a digitally integrated railway ecosystem.

KAVACH: Safety initiatives have been further strengthened with the expansion of the indigenous Kavach Automatic Train Protection System. This has been

commissioned over 3,100 route kilometres, with implementation underway on an additional 24,400 kilometres. It aims to prevent train collisions and enhance operational safety.

AI-Enabled Video Surveillance: The Video Surveillance System (VSS) has been expanded to 1,874 railway stations, using AI-based analytics and facial recognition technology to strengthen passenger safety and monitoring.

Real-Time Passenger Information: The Integrated Passenger Information System (IPIS), linked with the National Train Enquiry System (NTES), has been implemented at 1,405 stations, ensuring timely announcements and better passenger communication.

Tunnel Communication Systems: Communication systems have been introduced in key projects, including the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL), to ensure uninterrupted connectivity and safer operations in tunnel sections.

These initiatives highlight the continued commitment to building a safe and technology-driven railway network. It is aligned with the broader vision of digital transformation and improved passenger services.

### Operational and Infrastructure Achievements in 2025-2026

Building on decades of modernization, the achievements recorded during FY 2025-2026 represent the most recent phase in this continuing progression.

Rail operations remained strong throughout 2025-2026, with approximately 25,000 trains running daily, ensuring reliable and widespread connectivity across the country.

To meet increasing passenger demand, additional special train services were introduced during peak travel periods, improving convenience and accessibility for passengers. These operate during festivals like Diwali, Chhath, etc. In the year 2025-26 (till December 2025), approximately 65,000 special trains have been operated.

Indian Railways strengthened its domestic manufacturing capacity under the 'Make in India' initiative by producing 1,674 locomotives during 2025-2026, reflecting growing self-reliance in railway production.

Passenger services entered a new digital phase with the launch of the RailOne App in July 2025, providing a unified platform for ticket booking, train enquiries, and grievance redressal.

Freight and logistics infrastructure expanded with the commissioning of 35 Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals, supporting improved logistics efficiency and multimodal connectivity.

Passenger infrastructure advances, with 119 railway stations redeveloped under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, offering modern amenities and an enhanced travel experience.

### Conclusion

Over more than a century and a half, Indian Railways has steadily adapted to changing needs, technologies, and expectations. What began as a modest steam-powered service covering a short distance has grown into a vast and complex transport system. Today, it is capable of moving millions of passengers and large volumes of goods every day. Each phase—from steam locomotives and early engineering innovations to electrified networks, advanced safety systems, and digital platforms—has added new capabilities. At the same time, every advancement has built upon the foundations laid in earlier decades. Today, the railway network stands as a reflection of sustained engineering effort, operational discipline, and continuous improvement. Its ability to combine scale with efficiency, affordability with innovation, and tradition with new technology demonstrates how a historic institution can remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. As the nation moves forward, the railways will continue to serve not only as a mode of transport but as a dependable system that supports daily life, strengthens industry, and contributes to national development.

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

## Accelerate adoption of TReDS to boost MSME liquidity in J&K: CS Atal Dulloo

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 15: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Wednesday chaired a meeting at the Civil Secretariat here to review the implementation and expansion of the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department; Managing Director, J&K Bank; Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce; Secretary, Industries Department; Director Industries, Jammu; Chief General Manager, J&K Bank; Deputy General Manager, RBI, Jammu; representatives from Receivables Exchange of India Limited (RXIL - TReDS platform); and senior officers from various government departments.

Emphasizing the transformative potential of TReDS, the Chief Secretary highlighted its critical role in improving cash flow for Micro, Small



and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by facilitating timely realization of payments through invoice discounting. He stressed the need to fully leverage this digital platform to enhance credit accessibility and strengthen the MSME ecosystem across J&K.

The Chief Secretary called for exploring the possibility of participation from Government Departments, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), and large corporate buyers on the TReDS platform, noting that wider adoption would significantly help address the persistent

issue of delayed payments to MSMEs and improve their working capital cycle.

Underscoring the need for a coordinated approach, he directed the Industries & Commerce Department to take the lead in onboarding key government entities and departments onto the platform. He also emphasized conducting extensive awareness campaigns among MSMEs to educate them about the benefits and operational aspects of TReDS.

Setting clear targets, the Chief Secretary instructed the department to ensure

onboarding of at least 500 MSMEs from each region of the Union Territory within the next few months, to maximize the reach and impact of the platform.

He also appreciated the proactive role played by the Reserve Bank of India and other stakeholders in promoting invoice financing mechanisms for MSMEs in the region, and expressed confidence that sustained efforts in this direction would help in enhancing the financial resilience and growth prospects of the MSME sector in Jammu & Kashmir.

Census 2027

## Training Programme for master trainers on house listing, housing commences at IMPARD Srinagar

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, APRIL 15: Training Programme for Master Trainers on Houselisting and Housing Census (Phase-I) under Census 2027 commenced Wednesday at the Jammu & Kashmir Institute of Management, Public Administration and Rural Development (IMPARD), Main Campus, M.A. Road, Srinagar.

The programme, as per an official statement, is being organized in collaboration with the Directorate of Census Operations, J&K, and the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Government of India.

The four-day training programme, scheduled from April 15 to April 18, is witnessing the participation of around 34 Master Trainers drawn from various districts of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. These Master Trainers will play a pivotal role in cascading the training further by training field-level trainers at the district level, who will subsequently train enumerators and supervisors across different blocks, ensuring effective implementation of Census operations throughout the region.

In his inaugural address, Dr. Bilal Ahmad Bhat, Course Coordinator, highlighted the critical importance of the Census as the largest and most comprehensive source of statistical

data on the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the population. He emphasized that the data generated through the Census serves as a foundational input for evidence-based policy making, planning, and governance.

Dr. Bhat further noted that Census data plays a vital role in fulfilling constitutional requirements such as delimitation of constituencies, reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), and equitable allocation of developmental resources.

Welcoming the participants, He expressed his appreciation for the commitment of the Master Trainers and underscored their responsibility in ensuring accuracy and reliability in data collection.

Arun Kumar, Joint Chief Principal Census Officer and National Trainer, Directorate of Census Operations, J&K, in his address, stressed the crucial role of Master Trainers in maintaining the quality and credibility of Census data. He pointed out that the success of the Census largely depends on the efficiency and understanding of trainers at all levels. He urged the participants to thoroughly familiarize themselves with the detailed manuals, structured procedures, and comprehensive guidelines developed

for Census operations, and to effectively address queries at the field level. He reiterated that the Census, being the world's largest enumeration exercise, holds immense significance not only for administrators and policymakers but also for researchers, academicians, and the general public.

Manmeet Singh Loomba, Deputy Chief Principal Census Officer and National Trainer, Directorate of Census Operations J&K, highlighted a significant transformation in the upcoming Census exercise. He informed that, for the first time in the 150-year history of the Census, data collection will be conducted using digital technology through a specially designed mobile application. This technological advancement is expected to enhance the accuracy, efficiency, and timeliness of data collection. He further emphasized that the Census 2027 data will be instrumental in shaping future developmental strategies, particularly in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

The programme marks a significant step towards capacity building and preparedness for the successful conduct of Census 2027. Through structured training and collaborative efforts, the initiative aims to ensure a robust, transparent, and technology-driven Census process across the region.

## DC Anantnag participates in JJM Peyjal Samvad-2026

KT News Desk

ANANTNAG, APRIL 15: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat Wednesday virtually participated in the 7th edition of District Collectors' Peyjal Samvad held under Jal Jeevan Mission by Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Gol.

The Samvad, as per an official statement, is a knowledge sharing platform allowing stakeholders to interact and enhance cross-learning among districts.

During the Samvad, the DC presented a detailed presentation of the best JJM practices, challenges and outcomes in the district since its implementation. He highlighted key achievements like sources development, construction of infrastructure, realising targets besides creating grassroots awareness by involving local representatives, community leaders and villagers including women. The technical and procedural aspects adopted for successful implementation of the JJM were shared during the online session.

Further, the presentation featured a special segment on rejuvenation of springs

(Naghs) such as Badamnag and Zadinag. Zoning of service reservoirs was done to cater population at different elevations with varying demands for ensuring pressure equity across the terrains and with significant hill population, gravity-based schemes have been prioritised reducing O&M cost and dependency on electricity.

Convergence with different departments like Forest Department, Fisheries Department and RDD was established to protect catchment areas and ensure long term source and effective use of winter anti freezing techniques.

Interdepartmental co-ordination for immediate resolution of impediments of JJM in the district was also discussed. Water testing is done in all the villages, Anganwadi Centres and Schools of the district to ensure supply of potable water to the beneficiaries. Moreover, five women from each village have been trained to conduct field kit testing and results are uploaded on Ministry's Water Quality MIS Portal in realtime.

SE Hydraulics and other officers of Jal Shakti Department also attended the Samvad.

## DC Pulwama leads plantation drive at CB Nath Shadimarg

KT News Desk

PULWAMA, APRIL 15: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom, Wednesday led a plantation drive at CB Nath, Shadimarg under the ongoing 100-day intensive campaign of the Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan.

The drive, as per an official statement, was organised by the District Administration in collaboration with Mashaal Welfare Foundation (J&K).

Addressing the gathering, the DC said that the 100-day campaign has been launched with the objective of eliminating drug abuse from society through coordinated efforts of all stakeholders. He added that a comprehensive district action plan has been rolled out with a three-pronged strategy focusing on Information, Education and Communication (IEC), treatment and rehabilitation, and enforcement and prevention.

Laying special emphasis on enforcement, he said that strict action has been initiated against drug peddlers and the same will be further intensified in the coming days.

Highlighting the role of youth, the DC said that youth



clubs across the district will be revitalised and strengthened by involving motivated young individuals who will act as ambassadors of positive change under the campaign.

Emphasising inclusivity and community participation, he urged religious leaders, Auqaf members, senior citizens, social activists, civil society members and public representatives to actively participate in the campaign and help transform it into a mass movement to ensure a drug-free Pulwama.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from local residents, youth, tribal social activists, civil society members and students.

Among others, Chief Agricultural Officer, Pulwama; Block Development Officer Shadimarg, Tehsildar Rajpora;

Block Medical Officer Rajpora; officers from education department and other block-level officers were also present on the occasion.

Meanwhile, as part of the campaign, a series of awareness programmes and activities were conducted across municipal wards and Panchayat halqas in areas including Kuchmulla Tral, Achan Lasipora and Booh Awantipora, focusing on themes related to a drug-free society.

In addition, special awareness sessions highlighting the ill effects of drug abuse were organised in educational institutions across the district.

Furthermore, the Drug Control Department carried out intensive inspections of medical shops as part of the ongoing enforcement measures under the campaign.

## TSP Programme

### KVK Budgam empowers tribal farmers with Training

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, APRIL 15: Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Budgam under the leadership of Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-K, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai in collaboration with TSP ICAR organized awareness cum input distribution programme under the Project entitled "Promotion of natural farming in tribal areas of Kashmir".

Tribal farmers of village Surasyar Chadoora, received inputs like drums, buckets, gloves and shoes for preparation of bio-resource inputs for Natural Farming. Scientists and technical staff of KVK Budgam also attended the awareness programme.

Prof. Raihana Habib Kanth, Director Extension SKUAST-K, who was chief guest on the occasion, emphasized the importance of adopting innovative, climate-resilient, and sustainable agricultural technologies. She urged tribal farmers to maintain regular contact with KVK scientists and field officers to ensure proper technical guidance and maximize the benefits of government-supported schemes. She also



spoke about the status, scope, challenges, and imperativeness of Natural Farming in Kashmir. She explained the dynamics of water, soil, and climate while terming Natural Farming as the 'Farming of Microbes'.

Prof. Raihana Habib Kanth stressed the importance of minimum/zero tillage or conservation agriculture to ensure better Natural Farming. She urged the participating scientists and farmers to dig deeper into the understanding of biotic and abiotic developments in the farms practicing Natural Farming. She also briefed the farmers about the role of SKUAST-K in augmenting research in agriculture to facilitate the farming community in the valley.

Head KVK Budgam Dr. Bilal Ahmad Lone briefed the tribal farmers about the role of KVKs in facilitating agriculture and allied activities in the district through on farm trials, front

line demonstrations and skill-based training/awareness programmes. He encouraged the farmers to avail the services of the Kendra for more profitable farming.

The programme was marked by interactive sessions, showcasing of farming practices, and a strong emphasis on promoting entrepreneurship in the agricultural and allied sectors.

Dr. Shazia Ramzan briefed about the activities and progress of the Natural Farming project implemented in district. She emphasized the need for a clear strategy and vision that is necessary for popularizing Natural Farming. She emphasised working in tandem with all the stakeholders for better implementation and generating empirical data. She also highlighted the need to develop mechanisms to ensure the proper market for the produce of Natural Farming.

## JMC Commissioner announces regulated reopening of Bikram Chowk subway

KT News Desk

JAMMU, APRIL 15: Amid rising concerns over safety and repeated closure of the Bikram Chowk subway, Commissioner Jammu Municipal Corporation Dr. Devansh Yadav on Wednesday conducted an on-site inspection of the facility. He directed to restore its safe and regulated operation.

The inspection, as per an official statement, was carried out in presence of officials from the concerned police station, members of the municipal sanitation team including the Health Officer and Deputy Commissioner (North). The purpose of the visit was to assess ground realities and take prompt action to address issues related to misuse, hygiene and public safety.

The Commissioner announced that the subway shall remain open daily from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM to prevent anti-social and illegal activities that typically occur during late hours. Police officials were asked to carry out regular patrols



and maintain strict vigilance in and around the subway during operational hours to ensure the safety of commuters. At the same time, sanitation teams have been directed to maintain cleanliness and hygiene by ensuring routine cleaning and monitoring.

To further strengthen security, the subway has been equipped with adequate lighting and CCTV surveillance systems to keep track of commuter movement and deter misuse.

The Commissioner emphasized that the subway will function under continuous joint supervision of the Jammu Municipal Corporation and the Police Department, ensuring sustained maintenance, accountability and a safe environment for the public.

## Nasha Mukta J&K Abhiyan

### Mass Padyatra flagged off in Baramulla

KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, APRIL 15: As part of the ongoing Nasha Mukta Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan, Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, SF Hamid Wednesday flagged off a padyatra aimed at spreading awareness against drug abuse.

The padyatra, as per an official statement, witnessed enthusiastic participation from locals, students, officials, and officers, who marched from the DC Office to Dak Bungalow

Baramulla carrying placards and banners displaying powerful anti-drug slogans and messages.

Earlier, the Deputy Commissioner administered a pledge to all participants at the DC Office premises, reaffirming the collective commitment to eradicate drug abuse from society.

The initiative reflects the administration's continued efforts to engage the community and promote a drug-free Baramulla through mass awareness and public participation.

## DLSA Srinagar promotes legal literacy

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, APRIL 15: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Srinagar, in collaboration with the School Education Department, organized a series of legal awareness programmes Wednesday at Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Gulabagh, Srinagar.

The programme was conducted under the guidance of Haq Nawaz Zargar, Chairman, DLSA Srinagar (Principal District & Sessions Judge), and under the supervision of Tabassum Qadir, Secretary, DLSA Srinagar.

The awareness sessions, as per an official statement, aimed to sensitize students on vital legal issues and to enhance their understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

Adv. Sabiya Kousnar, Pro Bono Lawyer, delivered an informative session on the NALSA (Child-Friendly Legal

Services for Children) Scheme, 2024, highlighting its key provisions and benefits. She also spoke on Sexual Assault and Child Protection Laws, emphasizing the importance of legal safeguards available to children.

Further, Urba Rashid, Assistant Legal Aid Defense Counsel (LADC), conducted an engaging session on the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, educating students about workplace dignity, safety, and legal remedies.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from students and faculty members, reflecting a keen interest in legal awareness initiatives.

Such programmes are part of the continuous efforts of DLSA Srinagar to promote legal literacy and empower young minds with the knowledge necessary to safeguard their rights and make informed decisions.

## Army, GMC Doda organise blood donation camp

KT News Desk

DODA, APRIL 15: In a commendable humanitarian initiative, the Indian Army (10 RR), in collaboration with Government Medical College (GMC) Doda, organized a voluntary blood donation camp here at Associated Hospital (AH). The camp reflected a strong commitment towards community service and the noble cause of saving lives.

The event was graced by Chief Medical Officer Dr. Tanveer Ahmed Rather, along with the Incharge Blood Bank GMC, officers from the Indian Army and the Blood Bank staff.

Around 14 pints of blood were donated by Indian Army jawans, showcasing their spirit of selfless service and dedication to humanity. The initiative, as per an official statement, significantly contributed to enhancing blood reserves, ensuring timely availability for patients, especially in emergency situations.

The CMO appreciated the noble gesture of the Army personnel and lauded the efforts of all stakeholders involved in organizing the camp. The programme concluded with heartfelt gratitude extended to all donors and organizers for their invaluable contribution to this life-saving cause.

## Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan IEC Van drives anti-drug awareness across Harwan

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Apr 15: In a significant push towards building a drug-free society, the ongoing Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan is gaining momentum at the grassroots level, with an Information, Education and Communication (IEC) van actively traversing remote and rural areas of Harwan block to spread awareness about the dangers of drug abuse.

Moving through several panchayats including Dara-B, Gandthal, Fakir Gujri and adjoining areas, the IEC van, equipped with a public address system, disseminates powerful messages on the harmful effects of substance abuse, preventive measures, and the importance of collective responsibility in tackling the menace.

The initiative, spearheaded



by the Information Department in collaboration with Rural Development Department,

reflects a proactive approach to reach communities at their door-steps. The use of audio messaging

ensures that even those in flung areas are not left out of the awareness campaign.

The van does not only spread information but also sparks conversations among locals, particularly youth, about the long-term consequences of drug addiction. The campaign emphasizes early intervention, community vigilance, and the role of families in guiding individuals away from substance abuse.

Local residents have responded positively to the initiative, appreciating the government's efforts to address the growing concern of drug abuse through direct outreach. The presence of the IEC van in their neighborhoods has reinforced the message that awareness is the first step towards prevention.

The initiatives like the IEC van campaign are vital in bridging the information gap and empowering communities with knowledge and resources.

## Army's 53-RR organizes special cricket match for visually impaired in Budgam

Naveed Ul Haq Ganaie

Budgam, Apr 15: Indian Army's 53 Rashtriya Rifles (RR) on Wednesday organised a special cricket match for visually impaired persons at Government Boys Higher Secondary School, Nagam in Central Kashmir's Budgam district.

According to details available with news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), visually challenged players associated with Jammu and Kashmir Blind Welfare Trust (JKBWT) participated in the match, which was played between Vision Warriors and Zaiba Aapa Warriors.

After winning the toss, Vision Warriors opted to bat first and set a target of 68 runs. In response, Zaiba Aapa Warriors chased the total in 6.4 overs to win the match. Adil Ahmad scored an unbeaten 35 runs and was the top performer.

The event witnessed participation from students, school staff and locals from Nagam and adjoining areas.

The programme was attended by Commanding Officer 53 RR Nagam, Col Nitin Sharma; Second-in-Command Lt Col Mohsin Kamal; SDM Chadoora, Primrose Bashir and other dignitaries.

Chairman JKBWT Showkat Ahmad Lone thanked the Army and school administration for organising the event and said that the Deputy Commissioner Budgam and 53 RR have assured support for setting up a skill training institute for visually challenged youth in the district.

Commanding Officer 53 RR, Col Nitin Sharma, said that the Army will continue to support visually challenged youth through skill development and sports activities in the coming months. (KNO)

## DC Sgr hands over Truenat machines, AI-based X-ray units to hospitals

Felicitates officers, healthcare functionaries for achieving TB-Free status for 21 Panchayats

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Apr 15: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Wednesday handed over advanced diagnostic equipment, including three Truenat machines and handheld X-ray unit with AI technology to major City hospitals of the district, aimed to significantly enhance early detection and treatment outcomes of tuberculosis.

The three Truenat Machines have been sponsored by Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) under their CSR initiative.

The machines were formally handed over to the Medical Superintendents of Super Speciality Hospital, Children Hospital and District Tuberculosis Office Srinagar in a function held here at Meeting



Hall of the DC Office Complex.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner also

felicitated senior officers of District Administration, Block Development Officers, Senior functionaries and other healthcare workforce in recognition of a remarkable public health achievement to attain TB-Free Panchayat status in 21 Gram Panchayats in District Srinagar.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner urged

healthcare personnel to continue their dedicated efforts under the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan and assured full support from the District Administration in sustaining and further advancing these achievements.

The DC also expressed gratitude to Indian Oil Corporation Limited and Power Grid Corporation of India for their consistent support under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives

in providing advanced diagnostic equipments.

It is pertinent to highlight that District Srinagar is among the few districts in the country to be conferred with the prestigious Gold Status under the TB Mukht Panchayat initiative for all the 21 gram Panchayats.

The event was attended by Chief Planning officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Assistant Commissioner Panchayats, Sakhi Khan, BDO Harwan, Mohammad Muqit, BDO Qamarwari, Saima Ahad, Chief Medical Officer, Dr Tahir Sajad, District Tuberculosis Officer, Dr Abdul Rouf, Assistant Director TB DHSK, Dr. Afshana Bano, State TB Officer Kashmir Dr. Basra Mir BMO Hazratbal, Dr Abdul Majeed, Zonal Medical Officers, and other concerned staff associated with the program.

## District Admin Kupwara intensifies efforts under Nasha Mukht JK Abhiyan

KT News Desk

Kupwara, Apr 15: District Administration Kupwara on Wednesday organized a series of impactful activities under the 'Nasha Mukht JK Abhiyan' aimed at raising awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse and mobilizing collective efforts for a drug-free society.

Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, inaugurated a cleanliness drive at the D.C. Office Complex as part of the campaign.

The initiative, carried out in collaboration with the Army, symbolized the administration's commitment to promoting a healthy and drug-free environment across the district.

In another significant event, the Deputy Commissioner flagged off an Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) vehicle

from the D.C. Office premises. The vehicle will travel across various parts of the district to disseminate awareness messages on the dangers of substance abuse and encourage community participation in eliminating the drug menace. Officers and employees from multiple departments were present on the occasion.

A 'Nasha Mukht Pledge' was also administered, with participants reaffirming their resolve to work collectively towards eradicating drug abuse and safeguarding the future of the youth.

As part of the ongoing campaign, cleanliness drives were conducted across all blocks and municipalities in the district, engaging local bodies, volunteers, and community members.

Simultaneously, enforcement drives have been

intensified by the Police department to curb drug-related activities and ensure strict action against offenders.

The District Administration has also released a comprehensive schedule outlining a series of sustained and rigorous activities under the 'Nasha Mukht JK Abhiyan'. These include awareness programs in educational institutions, social media campaign, community outreach initiatives, counseling sessions, and coordinated enforcement measures, all aimed at fostering a united and proactive approach against substance abuse.

Reiterating its commitment, the District Administration Kupwara has called upon all stakeholders, including civil society, educational institutions, and youth organizations, to join hands in making Kupwara a drug-free district.

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### Pak smuggling drugs

not safe. Because drugs don't spread like flames but they spread like wind. That's why a 'Whale of Society' response is our only real and potent weapon against drug menace.

I firmly believe when society stands united behind a cause, the law becomes a thousand times stronger. We must build a society where the dealer fears law, and the one who breaks free from drugs feels proud of themselves, their family, their society, and their government," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said history proves that organized societies drive change and women's power plays a crucial role.

"This fight belongs to mothers and sisters, elders, youth, teachers, panchayats, athletes, and elected representatives alike. It is not the job of just one department. Defeating addiction is our collective responsibility," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor called upon every Panchayat and Ward to form women's vigilance committees.

"Women are the frontline of this war. You know where the household money goes. If anyone in the family showing symptom of addiction, don't hide it. Don't call him a criminal. Call him a patient. But that patient needs society's help, not just four walls," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor directly addressed the youth and observed that drugs are not cool but they are slavery to drugs and drug dealers. "Channel your energy into sports fields, art, and in study. In schools and colleges, we will make drugs a symbol of cowardice, not cool. Treatment, identification, and rehabilitation will be our priority," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised that each drug de-addiction centre must be genuine and equipped with all necessary resources. "Strict monitoring of these centres is essential. If any centre is found operating illegally or causing harm to society and the youth, it must be shut down within 24 hours without any hesitation, irrespective of how influential the individual running it. No one should be spared. Action is already underway against all such centres", he said.

The Lieutenant Governor directed police officials to break drug supply chains, list all Ramban drug traffickers at police stations and dismantle drug networks.

"The time for silence for society is over. Our divisional and district administration have prepared a comprehensive multi-pronged strategy covering every ward and panchayat. This fight is ours, all of us. If we fail today, future generations won't forgive us.

Let us make a pledge today that no drug dealer will find shelter in our village or our street. Every addict will be guided toward healing. Every young person's energy will be channelled toward purpose," the Lieutenant Governor said.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor administered the Anti-Drug Pledge and flagged

off a bike rally. A series of awareness programmes inspired citizens to take an active role in the crusade against narcotics. (KNO)

### INDIA bloc must

LED Video Walls, and launched high-precision fibre analysis equipment along with DesignNWeave software developed by IICT Srinagar.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, Advisor to CM Nasir Aslam Wani, MLAs and senior officials of the Industries & Commerce Department were present.

The Chief Minister inspected live demonstration units under the "Try Your Hands" segment, aimed at giving visitors an immersive experience of the craftsmanship process. He even tried the warping of yarn used in Pashmina weaving and appreciated prototypes developed by design institutions.

Omar later visited the main exhibition gallery, where around 30 display-cum-sale counters featuring authentic handmade products have been set up and interacted with Shilp Gurus and award-winning artisans.

Addressing the gathering, Abdullah described craftsmen as the "true ambassadors of Jammu and Kashmir's cultural heritage.

"The entire spectrum of our craftsmanship, from Kani and Pashmina shawls to chain stitch, copper work and wood carving, is being showcased. We often do not realise the magic in the hands of our artisans," he said.

He said the initiative aims to provide artisans direct market access, ensure fair value for their work and strengthen the authenticity of traditional products.

Calling for greater outreach, the CM directed the department to institutionalise the programme and organise such events more frequently. "These golden hands deserve a larger platform," he said.

Omar urged people to visit Kashmir Haat. "People should come and witness world-class crafts shaped by the magical hands of Kashmiri artisans. Such visits also directly support local livelihoods," he added.

The Chief Minister also flagged concerns over the decline of traditional markets, noting that several heritage marketplaces that thrived before the 1990s have become defunct. "We need to understand where our artisans have gone and how to bring them back," he said.

Abdullah said the previous incentive policy expired in September, and a revised framework is being prepared. "There is no benefit if incentives remain only on paper and do not translate on the ground. There is no investment, no factories come up," he said.

Omar said the government is consulting both existing unit holders and prospective investors. "By combining their feedback, we aim to frame a practical and effective policy that boosts investment and industry," he added.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister further refused to cut a tricolour ribbon at the event, instead choosing to respectfully unwrap it, underscoring the dignity and sanctity attached to

the national flag. (KNO)

### Offices to reopen

Banihal, to handle any emergencies Employees have been advised not to occupy government accommodation in Srinagar without proper allotment. However, they may retain their Jammu quarters for family members as per existing rules, it reads further.

"A uniform special travelling allowance of Rs 25,000 has been sanctioned for employees undertaking the move within the stipulated period. The government has also permitted advance drawal of April salary on April 29," reads the order.

The order also states that leave during the move period will be granted only in exceptional cases. Jammu-based employees opting out of the move may avail up to three days of special casual leave.

Departments have been instructed to complete all preparatory arrangements, including detachment of attached staff, by April 27.

Office timings in Srinagar will be from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm for the Civil Secretariat and 10:00 am to 4:30 pm for other offices. (KNO)

### J&K Assembly set

abrogation of Article 370, when the Centre made legal provisions in the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act to carry out delimitation exercise.

In 2020, the Union Government constituted a three-member commission headed by Justice (Retd.) Ranjana Desai to increase seats as well as redraw the boundaries of Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies. The exercise was completed in 2022, with the commission unveiling its final award. (KNO)

### Day temps remain

and a minimum of 17.4°C. Banihal registered 26.0°C and 6.8°C, Batote recorded 26.4°C and 11.9°C, while Katra reported 32.2°C and 17.6°C. Bhandarwah recorded 25.1°C and 7.7°C.

The department said no rainfall was recorded at most stations during the past 24 hours. An advisory issued by the MeT department said farmers can continue farm operations till April 16. (KNO)

### Lok Bhavan J&K

that bind civilization together," he said. Paying tribute to the iconic personalities of Himachal Pradesh, the Lieutenant Governor said that the state's history brims with richness and diversity and spirituality and rituals anchor Himachal Pradesh's social fabric.

"Himachal Pradesh's sacred earth, cradle of sages' austerities, abounds in ancient heritage and temples. Pilgrims worldwide revere its every stone as infused with divine energy. The state's history, indigenous culture, arts, and architecture stand pristine and many masterpieces are untouched across millennia.

Centuries of traditions have gifted Himachal Pradesh unparalleled folk arts, dances, and songs," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasized that India stands as a rare treasure trove of pluralism with diverse languages, cuisines, customs, and art forms. He urged the people to embrace and share this vibrant mosaic, sustained by endless community celebrations.

"The 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' initiative aptly recognizes cultural exchange as a dynamic catalyst for prosperity.

When local festivities transcend borders, they captivate citizens and spawn livelihoods. Interstate collaboration equips small communities with platforms and resources to scale their events, amplifying both reach and pride. A village's art, admired nationwide, yields not just income but enduring honor," the LG said.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor also released the activity calendar of J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.

### CM rededicates

the Regiment has played a pivotal role in major military operations, including the wars of 1965 and 1971, Operation Meghdoot in Siachen, and Operation Vijay during the Kargil conflict.

The Regimental Centre has also been recognised for its outstanding training standards and its contribution to shaping a new generation of disciplined and committed soldiers.

### Consultative meeting

The meeting aimed to deliberate upon and develop a comprehensive, robust and contextually relevant framework of regulations to guide the functioning of JKSSSA. The initiative is a significant step toward strengthening institutional mechanisms for ensuring quality standards, safety protocols and infrastructural parameters across schools in the Union Territory.

During the inaugural session, Gh. Hassan Sheikh, Chairperson, JKBOSE, who chaired the meeting, emphasized the importance of establishing a transparent, accountable and forward-looking regulatory architecture aligned with NEP 2020 and contemporary educational needs.

Prof Rasmita Das Swain from NIEPA, New Delhi highlighted the necessity of integrating best practices, stakeholder perspectives, and field realities into the bylaw framework.

Over the course of two days, the consultative meeting, reflecting a collaborative and participatory approach to policy formulation towards an inclusive and responsive framework to the evolving needs of the school education system, will focus on key thematic areas including governance structure, regulatory mandates, compliance mechanisms, quality assurance benchmarks and safety standards.

Interactive sessions, thematic presentations and group deliberations are expected to contribute to a well-rounded and implementable set of regulations.

### Northern Rly announces

rake (SLR) and will halt at Bari Brahmana and Ambala Cantt stations to facilitate loading and

unloading.

The service will initially run on a trial basis till May 31 and may be made permanent depending on the response, an official said, adding that the train will ensure the timely transportation of perishable items such as apples, cherries and other fruits within 23-24 hours. This, he said, will help retain freshness while offering a more economical and reliable alternative to road transport.

The initiative is expected to strengthen trade by enabling faster movement of Kashmir's produce, including saffron, walnuts and handicrafts, to markets across the country. (KNO)

### Visually impaired Zainab

and even my grandfather stood by me at every step. I would also like to thank all my teachers at Delhi Public School, Srinagar, especially for creating an inclusive environment," she said.

Zainab also made a special mention of the school's Learning Resource Centre (LRC), saying it provided her not only academic assistance but also emotional and mental support. "The LRC supported me emotionally and mentally, which played a big role in my success," she added.

Looking ahead, Zainab said she aspires to build a career in the field of Information Technology.

"I haven't thought much in detail, but I would like to pursue something related to computers, probably a Bachelor's in Computer Applications. I have always been interested in IT since childhood," she said.

Sharing her message for fellow students, Zainab emphasised the importance of consistency over sheer hard work. "In life, there will be many challenges, but we should never give up. It is not just about working hard, but working consistently. Even if we study for one or two hours daily, consistency is the key to achieving good results," she said.

She also had a heartfelt message for parents of specially-abled children, urging them to never underestimate or give up on their children.

"Parents should never think their child cannot achieve something. They must continue to support and believe in them. And children should never think they are less capable—when I can do it, everyone can do it," she said.

Zainab further revealed that interacting with prominent personalities in the past had boosted her confidence and motivated her to aim higher.

"I got opportunities to interview Omar Abdullah and Aamir Khan, which gave me immense motivation. It made me realise that I have a voice and I can use it to bring meaningful change," she said.

She credited her mentors for ensuring inclusivity and equal opportunities. "They never made us feel limited because of our disability. Instead, they created an environment where we could grow and express ourselves confidently," she added. (KNO)

## AI tool for inclusive development: Vice President

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 15: Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Wednesday called for embracing artificial intelligence as a force for greater good, saying it is empowering governments to serve better than ever before.

Addressing the 5th Dr Rajendra Prasad Memorial Lecture on 'AI for Good Governance' here, Radhakrishnan also said that AI is an enabler for building a Viksit Bharat that is inclusive, efficient, and future-ready.

He noted that India is at the forefront of leveraging AI which strengthens the vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'.

Artificial intelligence, he opined, is not just a technological revolution but a human revolution.

He expressed pride in the fact that parliamentary papers are now available in multiple Indian languages through AI interfaces. He also highlighted India's national AI-powered language platform, Bhashini, as a significant step towards inclusive governance and



linguistic empowerment.

Elaborating on the application of AI across sectors, the vice president said that in healthcare, artificial intelligence is playing a transformative role through initiatives such as AI-assisted TB screening, AI-enabled portable X-ray devices, and telemedicine platforms like eSanjeevani, ensuring that distance is no longer a barrier to healthcare access.

He added that similar transformative impacts are being witnessed in agriculture, MSMEs, cybersecurity, judiciary and administrative systems, emphasising that just as governance touches every field, AI too is now influencing

every sector.

He underlined that the country ranks among the top nations globally, including a high position in global AI vibrancy rankings.

He highlighted key government initiatives such as the India AI Mission and the Anusandhan National Research Foundation, which aim to strengthen the country's technological ecosystem.

He also referred to the recent AI Impact Summit held in Delhi where India's leadership in AI was widely acknowledged, noting that global industry leaders expressed strong confidence in India's vast potential in artificial intelligence.

## Bihar to follow Modi-Nitish model: CM Choudhary

### Tejashwi takes 'selected CM' jibe at him

PTI

Patna, Apr 15: Bihar will be governed on the "Modi-Nitish model", said Samrat Choudhary after being sworn in as chief minister on Wednesday, as congratulations rolled in from NDA leaders who exuded confidence that the state would progress rapidly under his leadership.

Governor Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain (retd) administered the oath of office and secrecy to Choudhary as chief minister, a day after Nitish Kumar resigned after serving in the post for the longest period.

"I will immediately start working for the prosperity of the state. It should remain clear that Bihar will continue to be governed on the Modi-Nitish model," the new chief minister said after the ceremony.

Congratulating Choudhary on being sworn in as the first BJP chief minister of Bihar, NDA leaders exuded confidence that the state would progress rapidly and contribute to materialising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve for a 'Viksit Bharat'.

Nitish Kumar, who is now a Rajya Sabha MP, took to X to congratulate Choudhary and expressed confidence that "under



your leadership, Bihar will develop rapidly and join the ranks of the most developed states in the country".

Besides NDA leaders, Leader of Opposition in the Bihar assembly, Tejashwi Yadav, extended his best wishes to Choudhary, albeit with a tinge of sarcasm.

"Congratulations to Samrat Choudhary ji on fulfilling his pledge today to remove the 'elected' chief minister Nitish Kumar ji from power, and heartfelt best wishes on becoming the 'selected' chief minister," he wrote in an X post.

He said that Choudhary must be aware of the "bitter, unpleasant and harsh" fact that even after 21 years of NDA rule, "Bihar

he told reporters.

The chief minister's father, Shakuni Choudhary, a seven-time MLA who had been part of several political parties, described his son's ascension as "God's grace".

"It is all a grace of God. I fought a long battle and helped form several political parties, but could not succeed. Today, with the blessings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Nitish Kumar ji, Samrat Choudhary has become the Bihar CM. Hard work indeed bears fruit," he said.

JD(U) national working president Sanjay Kumar Jha expressed hope that Bihar will enter a "new phase of development" under Choudhary's leadership and that "the pace of growth will accelerate, youth will get new opportunities, farmers will be empowered, and each section of society will witness equitable progress".

"We hope and are confident that the trust Nitish Kumar ji and the NDA legislature party have reposed in you will be fully justified, and you will take Bihar to new heights of progress," he wrote on X.

## AI chatbots frequently give inaccurate or incomplete health information: Study

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 15: An analysis of five chatbots' responses to health and medicine questions has revealed that a substantial amount of medical information is inaccurate and incomplete.

The findings, published in The British Medical Journal (BMJ) Open, also show that nearly half of the responses were problematic in aspects such as presenting a false balance between science and non-science-based claims.

A problematic response was defined as one that could plausibly direct lay users to potentially ineffective treatment or come to harm if followed without professional guidance.

Researchers, including those from The Lundquist Institute for Biomedical Innovation at Harbor-University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Medical Center in the US, said that even as generative AI chatbots are being rapidly adopted across research, marketing and medicine -- with people also using them as search engines -- a continued deployment without public education and oversight risks amplifying misinformation.

Five publicly available and widely used generative AI chatbots -- Google's Gemini, High-Flyer's DeepSeek, Meta AI



by Meta, Open AI's ChatGPT and Grok by xAI -- were prompted with 10 open ended and closed questions across each of five categories of cancer, vaccines, stem cells, nutrition, and athletic performance.

The prompts were designed to resemble common 'information-seeking' health and medical queries, language used in misinformation online, and in academic discourse.

The prompts were also used to stress test and pick up behavioural vulnerabilities of AI models by 'straining' them towards misinformation or contraindicated advice.

The chatbots' responses were categorised as non-problematic, somewhat problematic, or highly problematic, using an objective,

pre-defined criteria. The information in the responses was scored for accuracy and completeness, with particular attention given to whether a chatbot presented a false balance between science and non-science based claims, regardless of the strength of the evidence.

"The audited chatbots performed poorly when answering questions in misinformation-prone health and medical fields," the authors wrote.

"Nearly half (49.6 per cent) of responses were problematic: 30 per cent somewhat problematic and 19.6 per cent highly problematic," they said.

Grok was found to generate "significantly more highly problematic responses" than would be expected, the researchers said.

Performance of the chatbots was found to be the strongest in topics of cancer and vaccines, and weakest in stem cells, athletic performance and nutrition.

Responses were consistently presented with confidence and certainty, with few caveats or disclaimers, the study found.

Reference quality was noted to be poor, with an average completeness score of 40 per cent.

Chatbot hallucinations -- creating false information and presenting as fact -- and fabricated citations meant that no chatbot provided a fully accurate reference list, the researchers said.

"Our findings regarding scientific accuracy, reference quality, and response readability highlight important behavioural limitations and the need to re-evaluate how AI chatbots are deployed in public-facing health and medical communication," the authors said.

"By default, chatbots do not access real-time data but instead generate outputs by inferring statistical patterns from their training data and predicting likely word sequences.

They do not reason or weigh evidence, nor are they able to make ethical or value-based judgments," they said.

## Stock markets surge over 1 pc amid hopes of resumption of US-Iran peace talks

PTI

Mumbai, Apr 15: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty surged over 1 per cent on Wednesday as crude oil prices fell below the USD 100 per barrel mark amid hopes of renewed diplomatic engagement between the US and Iran.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,263.67 points or 1.64 per cent to settle at 78,111.24. During the day, it zoomed 1,422.85 points or 1.85 per cent to 78,270.42.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 388.65 points or 1.63 per cent to end at 24,231.30.

Among the 30-Sensex firms, InterGlobe Aviation, Eternal, Power Grid, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, and Larsen & Toubro were the major gainers.

Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank were the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading at USD 95.74 per barrel, up by 1.4 per cent.

US President Donald Trump has said that the war with Iran is "close to over," asserting that if he pulled up stakes right now, it would take Tehran 20 years



to rebuild the country. "I think it's close to over, yeah. I view it as very close to being over," Trump told Fox News in an interview that will be telecast later Wednesday.

As per a US media report on Tuesday, Trump said that a second round of talks with Iran could be held in Islamabad "over the next two days".

"The primary trigger for today's rally was a visible de-escalation in geopolitical concerns. Reports indicating a potential easing of tensions in the Middle East, along with renewed hopes around US-Iran dialogue, helped restore

risk appetite. "This shift was further reinforced by a sharp decline in crude oil prices, with Brent falling below the 95 dollar mark. For an import-dependent economy like India, this provides meaningful relief by easing inflation pressures, supporting the currency, and improving margin outlook across sectors," Hari Prasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended higher.

## EC to deploy 2,407 central force companies for first phase of Bengal polls on Apr 23

PTI

Kolkata, Apr 15: The Election Commission will deploy 2,407 companies of central armed police forces for the first phase of the West Bengal assembly polls on April 23, with the highest number of personnel likely reserved for Murshidabad district, a senior official said on Wednesday.

Elections to the 294-member West Bengal assembly will be held in two phases - on April 23 and April 29. Votes will be counted on May 4.

The official said Murshidabad is likely to have the highest deployment with 316 companies of forces, including 240 in Murshidabad police district and 76 in Jangipur.

Murshidabad has been witness to several incidents of violence in recent years, including clashes linked to protests over the Waqf Act and unrest during the NRC agitation.

"Altogether 2,407 companies of central forces are being deployed in the first phase. The allocation has been made following a detailed vulnerability assessment to ensure voters can exercise their franchise without fear," the EC official said. Purba Medinipur district is

likely to see the second-highest deployment with 273 companies, he said, adding that the district is being closely watched due to the politically crucial Nandigram seat, where Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari is in the fray.

The Commission has divided Uttar Dinajpur into two police districts, with 61 companies earmarked for Islampur and 71 for Raiganj, he said.

Among other key deployments, 125 companies will likely be stationed in the Asansol-Durgapur Police Commissionerate and 44 in the Siliguri Police Commissionerate.

In north Bengal, Darjeeling is likely to have 61 companies, Kalimpong 21, Jalpaiguri 92 and Alipurduar 77, the official said.

Polling in the first phase will cover eight north Bengal districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, Cooch Behar, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda, apart from Murshidabad and the western districts such as Jhargram, Purulia and Bankura.

Elections will also be held in Purba and Paschim Medinipur, Paschim Bardhaman and Birbhum during this phase.

## Artemis II's success gives confidence to India for Gaganyaan mission, says astrophysicist

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 15: The success of Artemis II gives a lot of confidence to India, as the country's upcoming Gaganyaan mission plans to demonstrate the same capabilities that the recent spaceflight did, said Somak Raychaudhury, vice-chancellor and professor of physics at the Ashoka University.

The Artemis II crew splashed down in the Pacific Ocean, off the coast of California, on April 11 after completing a historic 10-day journey around the Moon. This was the first time in more than 50 years that humans ventured into lunar vicinity.

"The flawless flight of Artemis II is fantastic news for Indians because the Gaganyaan mission will soon happen. It will do the same things that Artemis II did," Raychaudhury, one of India's best-known astrophysicists, said.

"The ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) has been working with the NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) on Artemis for a long time and our astronauts are going through the same training programmes," he added.

The Gaganyaan mission, which will



be India's first human spaceflight, is expected to be launched in 2027.

The Artemis programme's first mission was an uncrewed spacecraft that went around the Moon and came back in 2022. The second mission is essentially a precursor for the actual Moon-landing mission in 2028.

The programme marks the beginning of a new era in human spaceflight

that aims to create a permanent settlement on the Moon and frequent travels by humans to the lunar surface.

"Unlike the Apollo missions of the 1960s and 1970s, which were predominantly about the space race and Moon landings, the new missions are about ensuring a longer stay on the lunar surface," Raychaudhury said.

However, building a permanent facility on the Moon will not be easy. It will require several Moon missions, which will have to carry humans, robots, equipment and fuel on the lunar surface.

Even ensuring a workable toilet will be a challenge -- the toilet of Artemis II's Orion spacecraft, which housed the four astronauts, suffered at least two major failures during the mission.

## Iran war 'close to over,' says Trump

PTI

Washington, Apr 15: US President Donald Trump has said that the war with Iran is "close to over," asserting that if he pulled up stakes right now, it would take Tehran 20 years to rebuild the country.

The president's comments come hours after the US Central Command said it has successfully blocked all traffic to and from Iranian ports and coastal areas in the first 24 hours of Trump's blockade, saying the US was supporting freedom of navigation for vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

"I think it's close to over, yeah. I view it as very close to being over," Trump told Fox News in an interview that will be telecast later Wednesday.

The interview for the programme "Mornings with Maria" was recorded on Tuesday.

"I think it's — I had to divert



because if I didn't do that, right now you'd have Iran with a nuclear weapon. And if they had a nuclear weapon, you'd be calling everyone over there 'sir,' and you don't want to do that," Trump said.

The US and Iran failed to reach an agreement following historic marathon talks in Islamabad over the weekend to find a peaceful

resolution to the conflict that started on February 28.

A US media report said on Tuesday that Trump said that a second round of talks with Iran could be held in Islamabad "over the next two days."

"You should stay there, really, because something could be happening over the next two days,

and we're more inclined to go there," Trump told The New York Post.

Trump attributed the possibility of a second round of talks to the "great job" done by Pakistan Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir.

"It's more likely, you know why? Because the field marshal is doing a great job," the US President said.

He did not say whether Vice President JD Vance would continue to lead the negotiating team, which included White House Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner.

"I've been saying they can't have nuclear weapons. So I don't like the 20 years," Trump said when asked about suggestions that a moratorium might encourage Iran to make an agreement.

"I don't want them (Iran) to feel like they have a win," the US President said.

## Vance says US-Iran mistrust cannot be solved overnight

REUTERS

Washington, Apr 15: US Vice President JD Vance said there was a lot of mistrust between Washington and Tehran that cannot be resolved overnight but he added that Iranian negotiators wanted to make a deal and that he felt "very good about where we are."

Talks to end the Iran war could resume in Pakistan over the next two days, President Donald Trump said on Tuesday, after the collapse of weekend negotiations prompted Washington to impose a blockade on Iranian ports. A fragile two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran still has a week to run. Vance was

involved in the talks last weekend in Pakistan.

"There is a lot of, of course, mistrust between Iran and the United States of America. You are not going to solve that problem overnight," Vance said during a Turning Point USA event.

Iranian negotiators wanted to make a deal, he said. "I feel very good about where we are," Vance added.

The Iran war began when the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28. Iran responded with its own strikes on Israel and Gulf states that host US bases. US-Israeli strikes on Iran and Israeli attacks in Lebanon have killed thousands and displaced millions.

## UN nuclear chief urges strict Iran checks in any deal to end war

AP

Seoul, Apr 15: The head of the UN's nuclear watchdog said Wednesday that "very detailed" measures to verify Iran's nuclear activities must be included in a potential US-Iran agreement to end their war in the Middle East.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi stressed the need for the thorough verification regime for Iran's nuclear programme, as US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that a second round of talks with Iran could happen over the next two days.

The Trump administration has said that preventing Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon is a key war aim. Iran has previously said it isn't developing such weapons but rejected limits on its nuclear programme.

Last weekend in Pakistan, an initial round of talks between the two countries failed to produce an agreement. The White House said Iran's nuclear ambitions were a central sticking point. But an Iranian diplomatic official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the closed-door talks, denied that negotiations had failed over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

"Iran has a very ambitious, wide nuclear programme so all of that will require the presence of IAEA inspectors," Grossi told reporters in Seoul. "Otherwise, you will not have an agreement. You will have an illusion of an agreement."

He said that any agreement on nuclear technology "requires very detailed verification mechanisms."

Iran has not allowed the IAEA access to its nuclear facilities bombed by Israel and the United States during a 12-day war in June, according to a confidential IAEA report circulated to member states and seen by The Associated Press in February.

The report stressed that it "cannot verify whether Iran has suspended all



enrichment-related activities," or the "size of Iran's uranium stockpile at the affected nuclear facilities."

Iran has long insisted its programme is peaceful, but the IAEA and Western nations say Tehran had an organised nuclear weapons programme up until 2003.

The IAEA has maintained Iran has a stockpile of 440.9 kilograms of uranium enriched up to 60 per cent purity, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90 per cent.

That stockpile could allow Iran to build as many as 10 nuclear bombs, should it decide to weaponise its programme, Grossi said earlier.

Such highly enriched nuclear material should normally be verified every month, according to the IAEA's guidelines.

During Wednesday's press conference, Grossi also said his agency has confirmed "a rapid increase" in activities at nuclear facilities in North Korea. His comments echoed a view by many foreign observers that North Korea has taken steps to expand its main Yongbyon nuclear complex and build additional uranium-enrichment sites since its diplomacy with the US collapsed in 2019.

Last September, South Korea's Unification Minister Chung Dong-young said that North Korea was operating four uranium enrichment facilities and that they were running everyday.

## Abhishek Sharma, Axar Patel added to NADA's RTP for second quarter of 2026

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 15: India's T20 World Cup-winning stars Abhishek Sharma and Axar Patel were noticeable additions to the National Anti-Doping Agency's (NADA) Registered Testing Pool, which was dominated by athletics, for the second quarter of the ongoing year. Abhishek and Axar have replaced Smriti Mandhana and Shreyas Iyer in the latest list of 348 sportspersons in the RTP who will be required to share their whereabouts with the anti-doping agency and be available for testing in a specified window everyday.

Three failures to provide whereabouts is considered a doping



violation. The other cricketing names remained unchanged with Test and

ODI skipper Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Jasprit Bumrah, K L Rahul

Arshdeep Singh and Tilak Verma among those picked.

From the women's team, which won a historic ODI World Cup last year, all-rounder Deepti Sharma and Shafali Verma continue to be on the list alongside Renuka Singh Thakur. In all, 14 cricketers have been placed in the list by the NADA.

The athletics count, which was 118 in the previous NADA RTP, rose to 134 now and featured all major names such as steppledancer Avinash Sable, hurdler Jyothi Yarraji, decathlete Tejaswin Shankar and sprinter Animesh Kujur among others.

Long jumpers Shaili Singh and M Sreesankar and discus thrower Tajinderpal Singh Toor have also been named.

## Xi calls China-Russia ties 'precious' in current int'l context

AP

Beijing, Apr 15: Chinese President Xi Jinping said Wednesday that the stability and certainty of China-Russia relations are particularly "precious" in the face of an international landscape intertwined with change and chaos.

During a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Beijing, Xi said the strong vitality and exemplary significance of the friendship treaty between the two countries stand out even more under such a backdrop.

He said foreign ministries from both countries would need to fully implement the consensus reached between him and Russian President Vladimir Putin, calling for strengthening strategic communication and close diplomatic coordination. He also urged them to promote the comprehensive strategic partnership between Beijing and Moscow to "stand higher, walk more steadily and go further."

Xi touted the value of the two nations'

ties, but he did not specify what he referred to as chaos and changes in the international context, as uncertainty still lingers about how long the Iran war would last.

In clips from an interview with the Fox Business Network, US President Donald Trump said Tuesday the war was "close to over." Trump has repeatedly declared a US victory in Iran after the war started — even as the reality on the ground has been far more complicated.

Relations between China and Russia have deepened in recent years, particularly following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022. Trump's unorthodox approach to the war in Ukraine has added a twist to the relationship but doesn't appear to have fundamentally changed it.

When Putin visited China in September, Xi welcomed his counterpart as an "old friend." Putin also addressed Xi as "dear friend."

Lavrov arrived in China on Tuesday for a two-day trip at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi.

## Playing all formats for India is blessing not a challenge: Washington Sundar

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 15: All-format players are a shrinking breed as cricket's calendar becomes more crowded than ever but happy to be a part of that tribe, Indian all-rounder Washington Sundar sees it as a "beautiful blessing" rather than a massive challenge.

Washington, who has had to deal with a fair share of injuries in his India career that began in 2017, has been a regular member of the national squad over the past 18 months.

"Being an all-format player for the Indian cricket team is a massive blessing. Because we all know the kind of cricket that the Indian team has always played," he told PTI in an interview.

"And getting to play three formats is a beautiful blessing. And obviously, looking forward to a lot of more good contributions from myself and eventually win a lot of games for my country," he said.

The all-rounder played only a couple of games in India's T20 World Cup campaign at home but delivered notable performances in the longest format.

He came of age in Test cricket with a match-saving hundred alongside Ravindra Jadeja against England in Manchester last year. That gritty effort was followed by an explosive fifty in the fifth and final Test at the Oval where India were able to level the series.

Washington, currently doing the job for Gujarat Titans in the



IPL, said he has worked extensively on his fitness in recent past which has helped him get regular opportunities across formats.

He had a side strain leading into the T20 World Cup but was able to recover just in time.

Washington said he knows his body better than ever now and this is helping him stay in shape for top-flight cricket.

"I don't see too many challenges there. Yes, fitness plays a massive role. And you have got to understand how your body sort of works across situations, across conditions," he said.

"And obviously, (it helps in) playing different roles and train accordingly. I've always given a lot of importance on understanding my own body. And yes, as I said, things have been

really good in the last one year," he said.

The frequent opportunities in red ball cricket have come following the retirement of senior off-spinner R Ashwin during the tour of Australia in 2024-25.

In the shorter formats, he has had to evolve as a batter and that includes polishing his power game.

"Yeah, definitely. I mean, you have got to play different roles slightly differently and understand what's required of yourself, especially in terms of skills and work accordingly," he said when asked about the power-hitting aspect of the game.

He hopes to be a part of the ODI World Cup in South Africa next year but the 'biggest goal' is to win every game that he plays for India.

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