



Not all wars rage on borders, some battles brew unseen for years: LG Sinha

» Says Rajouri prone to cross-border drug smuggling » Joins Padyatra under drug-free J&K campaign

Yogesh

Rajouri, Apr 18: Stating that not all wars rage on borders and some battles brew unseen for years, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday said that countless Jammu Kashmir families have fought addiction within their walls and many have lost loved ones to it.

Addressing a public rally here under drug-free J&K campaign, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), joined Padyatra.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that border district Rajouri is sensitive and prone to cross-border drug smuggling.

“But we are determined to crush these challenges, dismantle the drug trade and liberate society from addiction. From April 11, J&K Police had launched a relentless crackdown in Jammu Division. More than 45 FIRs were filed, 63 smugglers nabbed and massive drug hauls seized between the 11th and 15th. Regular Checks are now covering schools, pharmacies, drug agencies and this drive will continue relentlessly,” the Lieutenant Governor said.



“On April 11, from the hallowed grounds of Jammu's MA Stadium, we sounded the clarion call to total war by launching a resolute 100-day crusade against drug addiction. I believe addiction is no mere personal failing but it's a gaping wound in our society's fabric. Our terrorist neighbour deploys it as an insidious weapon, nurturing terror through drug smuggling and eroding our nation's strength from within. We shall prevail in this battle by uniting as one and every citizen rising

with unyielding resolve,” LG Sinha said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that cases registered before 11 April has witnessed 3 times increase in last 7 days.

“In 100 days, we must completely break the back of drug networks. When the power of society and the might of the administration come together, neither smugglers nor criminals will be spared,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

LG Sinha also highlighted that prevention | [More on P6](#)



Pilgrims bidding adieu outside Haj House, Srinagar before leaving for Mecca for pilgrimage on Saturday

Pic: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

Kashmir's first Haj 2026 batch departs amid tears, prayers

Emotional scenes at Haj House, airport as 431 pilgrims leave in three flights for Saudi Arabia; CM Omar sees off Hajis at airport

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Apr 18: Amid scenes of faith, emotion and hope, the first batch of Haj pilgrims from Kashmir Valley departed for Saudi Arabia on Saturday, marking the beginning of the sacred journey.

Hundreds of family members gathered since early morning at Haj House, Bemina, here to bid farewell to their loved ones. The premises witnessed touching moments as relatives embraced departing pilgrims, offered prayers and wiped away tears before the journey began.

Children waved goodbye to elders, women stood in



prayerful silence, while elderly pilgrims recited verses, holding prayer beads and travel documents close to their hearts.

The emotional send-off

reflected the deep spiritual significance of Haj for Kashmiri families.

“It feels like Allah has invited us to His house. We waited many years” | [More on P6](#)

Arrangement for RS elections cost J&K exchequer Rs 73548

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Apr 18: Authorities spent Rs 73548 on conducting the Rajya Sabha elections in the Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory in October 2025.

According to official documents accessed by news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the J&K Election Department had transferred Rs 1 lakh for the exercise, out of which Rs 73548 was utilized to make necessary arrangements for polls to four vacant Rajya Sabha seats.

The documents reveal that Rs 21150 was spent on honorarium and refreshments for officers and officials deployed on election duty. The remaining Rs 52398 was utilized to cover other essential arrangements required for the electoral process.

The Rajya Sabha polls in Jammu & Kashmir | [More on P6](#)

LG inaugurates Dr Raj Kumar Thapa Memorial, Museum & Library

KT News Desk

Rajouri, Apr 18: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday dedicated a Memorial, Museum, and Library in Rajouri to honor the lasting legacy of martyr ADC Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa.

Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa attained martyrdom in unprovoked shelling by Pakistan during



Operation Sindoore.

The Lieutenant Governor paid tribute to Dr. Thapa, recalling his selfless service and steadfast dedication to public welfare. “This memorial will inspire generations to come,” he said.

The event also featured a documentary on Dr. Thapa's life. Family members of Dr Raj Kumar Thapa and senior officials of security | [More on P6](#)

CM Omar inspects LD Hospital Extension Block 'New facility to mark major milestone in upgrading healthcare infrastructure'

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Apr 18: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today inspected the ongoing construction of the Extension Block at Government Lalla Ded Hospital and conducted a comprehensive review of the project's progress, execution strategy and infrastructure development.

The upcoming facility, being developed at the premier maternity care hospital, is designed as a dedicated Infertility and Gynaecological Oncology Centre and will significantly strengthen specialised maternal and neonatal healthcare services in Jammu and Kashmir.



Minister assessed the pace and quality of construction, reviewed augmentation of critical facilities and emphasised adherence to timelines. He directed the concerned authorities to ensure expeditious

completion of the project while maintaining the highest standards of quality.

He was accompanied by his Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani, Principal and Dean Government Medical College

Srinagar Dr. (Prof) Iffat Hassan, Administrator GMC Srinagar Mohammad Ashraf Hakak, Medical Superintendent LD Hospital, and senior officers from PWD (R&B), J&KERA Kashmir, among others.

The Chief Minister was briefed on the project, which is being executed under the World Bank-funded Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project (JFRP) by the PWD (R&B) Department at an estimated cost of 118.22 crore. The facility is being constructed as a G+5+attic structure with a total built-up area of about 11,640 square metres and will house around 117 specialised beds (65 adults and | [More on P6](#)

Opposition 'crushed women's dreams' by blocking quota bill: PM

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said opposition parties had “mercilessly crushed” the dreams of women by not allowing the women's reservation bill to pass in Parliament despite the government's best efforts.

In an address to the nation, a day after a bill to implement women's reservation in legislatures was defeated in the Lok Sabha, Modi said the self-serving politics of parties like the Congress, the DMK, the TMC, and the Samajwadi Party has come at the expense of the nation's women, and that they



had foiled efforts to grant 33 per cent reservation to women in legislatures.

“I seek forgiveness from all women of the country,” he said.

The prime minister said opposition parties that opposed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam

in Parliament were taking women's power for granted.

“Today, every citizen of India is witnessing how the march of India's women has been halted. The dreams of the country's women have been mercilessly crushed, and despite our utmost efforts, we could not succeed,” he said.

Modi said women had seen how parties like the Congress, the TMC and the DMK “celebrated their selfish politics” against women's empowerment.

“The opposition has committed a sin by opposing women's reservation, and they will surely be punished for this. Opposition | [More on P6](#)

Fatty liver often silent in early stages, nearly one in every three in Valley affected: Doctors Urge return to balanced diets, regular physical activity, weight management

Jahangeer Ganaie

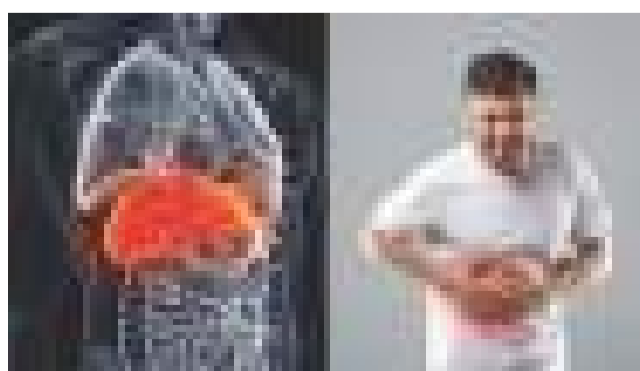
Srinagar, Apr 18: A worrying rise in fatty liver disease cases across Jammu and Kashmir has been linked to drastic lifestyle changes, unhealthy eating habits, and declining physical activity among residents.

Doctors warned that nearly one in every three individuals in the Valley is now affected—a condition once considered relatively uncommon but now emerging as a widespread health concern cutting across age groups.

Speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Prof Dr Iqbal Saleem,

Head of the Department of Surgery at GMC Srinagar, described the liver as the body's largest and most vital organ, responsible for carrying out most metabolic processes essential for survival. “However, as a society, we have drifted away from simple foods and active lifestyles. The increasing dependence on processed and ultra-processed foods, along with high-sugar drinks, is one of the main reasons behind the rising trend of fatty liver in our Valley,” he said.

He further said that the shift from physically demanding routines to sedentary lifestyles has compounded the problem.



“We were once a hardy people who worked diligently. Today, we have become armchair-bound, giving up physical work. People must stay away

from alcohol and other bad habits and return to healthier habits,” he added.

Doctors said that non-alcoholic fatty liver disease

(NAFLD) and its more severe form, non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), are witnessing a rapid increase, particularly among younger populations.

Dr Ubaid Ahmad, a gastroenterologist, explained that fatty liver is closely associated with modern dietary patterns and inactivity. “High-calorie processed foods combined with lack of exercise contribute to obesity, hypertension, and diabetes, all of which significantly increase the risk of fatty liver,” he said.

He warned that untreated fatty liver can progress to serious complications, including liver fibrosis, chronic liver

disease (CLD), and even liver cancer. “We are now seeing liver cancer cases rise, in some instances overtaking hepatitis as a leading cause of liver-related deaths,” he noted.

Doctors highlighted a major dietary transition in Kashmir, where traditional home-cooked meals are increasingly being replaced by fast food and ready-to-eat options. “Foods rich in fat, salt, and sugar have become a regular part of daily diets, replacing balanced, home-cooked meals that once ensured proper nutrition,” they said, adding that children and teenagers are now the biggest consumers of unhealthy

foods.

“Fast food is no longer limited to busy adults. Young people are consuming pizzas, burgers, chips, sugary drinks, and frozen meals regularly. This is deeply concerning,” they added.

According to doctors, fatty liver is now being diagnosed in individuals as young as their early twenties. “Among obese and diabetic patients, the prevalence ranges between 60 and 70 per cent, making them especially vulnerable,” they said.

Experts caution that fatty liver often remains silent in its early stages, showing no obvious symptoms | [More on P6](#)

Strengthening infrastructure, addressing public grievances key priorities: Javed Rana

Inaugurates CFC, inspects sports stadium at Mankote



KT NEWS DESK

MENDHAR, APRIL 18: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, on Saturday inaugurated a Community Facilitation Centre (CFC) at Mankote and inspected the under-construction Sports Stadium during a public outreach visit to the area.

The CFC, constructed by the Rural Development Department at a cost of Rs. 17 lakh, is aimed at strengthening the grassroots governance and service delivery by bringing multiple public services and community activities under one roof. "The present administration is

"The present administration is making all endeavours to extend necessary services to the people at their door steps and setting up of CFCs in the remote areas is a part of these initiatives" Javed Rana said while addressing the locals after inaugurating the CFC.

development related issues.

A delegation of students from Government Degree College Mendhar submitted a memorandum highlighting the concerns regarding the need for a girls' hostel and a multi-purpose hall.

The Minister gave a patient hearing to the delegations and assured them that their genuine demands would be examined on priority for appropriate action.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to balanced and inclusive development, the Minister said that strengthening infrastructure and addressing the public grievances remain key priorities to ensure improved facilities and opportunities for the people of the region.

making all endeavours to extend necessary services to the people at their door steps and setting up of CFCs in the remote areas is a part of these initiatives," Javed Rana said while addressing the locals after inaugurating the CFC.

The Minister, as per an official statement, also inspected the ongoing construction of the Sports Stadium at Mankote, being developed at an estimated cost of Rs. 58 lakh. He directed the executing agencies to ensure timely completion with strict adherence to the set quality standards.

During the visit, several delegations and individuals called on the Minister and projected various

Census 2027 Commissioner SMC, Principal Census Officer Srinagar assess preparedness



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, APRIL 18: Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) Commissioner Faz Lul Haseeb and Principal Census Officer (Urban) Srinagar, Saturday chaired a high-level review meeting to assess preparedness for the forthcoming Census 2027 at Municipal Central Office, Karan Nagar, Srinagar. All district officers participated in the meeting, wherein a comprehensive review of preparedness was undertaken. The discussions primarily focused on strengthening inter-departmental coordination and ensuring timely deployment of employees for Census operations. During the meeting, the Commissioner, as per an official statement, highlighted the significance of the Census as a vital national exercise that provides critical demographic data essential for evidence-based policymaking, effective governance, and developmental planning. He urged all concerned departments to extend full cooperation and nominate competent, dedicated, and responsible officials to ensure the smooth and efficient conduct of the enumeration process.

The Census Charge Officers were specifically directed to ensure timely completion of all preparatory activities within their respective jurisdictions, including verification of staff deployment, coordination with line departments, and readiness for subsequent phases of Census operations.

Director Census, J&K and Ladakh concludes Master Trainers Programme for Census 2027

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, April 18: A training programme for Master Trainers for Census 2027 was organised by the Directorate of Census Operations, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh at the Institute of Management, Public Administration and Rural Development (IMPARD), J&K in Srinagar on Saturday.

Amit Sharma, Director of Census Operations and Chief Principal Census Officer, J&K and Ladakh, as per a PIB statement, addressed the participants and spoke on the role of Master Trainers in data collection during Census operations. He said that Census 2027 will be conducted in a digital format and requires trained personnel at all levels.

The four day training programme covered a wide range of issues including Census concepts and definitions, training methodology for enumerators and supervisors, and House Listing Operations (HLO). It included sessions on ground verification of House Listing Block boundaries, preparation of layout maps and interaction with respondents.

Sessions were also held on the use of digital tools, including the HLO Mobile Application, Supervisor App and the Census



Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) portal. Participants were trained in installation, data entry, validation and troubleshooting. Sessions on data privacy and security were conducted. Modules on self-enumeration covered facilitation of citizen participation. Role-play exercises and field visits were conducted on household enumeration and prescribed procedures.

The programme included theoretical sessions, practical demonstrations and exercises such as quizzes, group activities and training practice by Master Trainers.

Arun Kumar, Joint Chief Principal Census Officer and National Trainer, and Shri Manmeet Singh Loomba, Deputy Chief Principal Census Officer and National Trainer, conducted sessions through the training modules.

DC Anantnag reviews road safety measures

Directs timely compensation to victims

KT NEWS DESK

ANANTNAG, APRIL 18: Deputy Commissioner (Chairman, District Road Safety Committee) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat, chaired a review meeting of the committee on Saturday to assess the measures taken by various agencies to reduce road accidents besides status of compensation for victims in the district.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by ADC, SE R&B (Member Secretary), CMO, ARTO, DySP Traffic, Executive Engineers of R&B divisions, EOs of MCs, representatives of NHAI, BEACON and other agencies involved in road safety planning and implementation.

At the outset, the SE R&B presented a detailed overview of the decisions taken by the committee in the previous meeting and the progress achieved so far. The chair was informed that in addition to responsive relief, several preventive

measures including identification and remedial action at accident prone "black spots", regular road maintenance and strengthening of vulnerable stretches, improvement and standardisation of road signage and reflectors and technical inspection of vehicles to ensure road worthiness, have been taken to minimise the occurrence of accidents across the district.

It was further informed that during the year 2025, 536 road accidents were recorded resulting in 42 casualties.

Presently, the district has 24 PM RAHAT designated hospitals to provide timely medical care and support to accident victims.

On the occasion, the Committee held detailed deliberations on key issues like analysis of IRAD data, identification of remaining black spots and measures for their rectification besides smooth implementation of PM Sadak Suraksha (Setu/Sehat) financial assistance scheme in the district.

Kashmir Thunder



IS AVAILABLE AT ALL LEADING STALLS

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Rameez Ahmad Bhat S/o: Gh Mohd Bhat R/o: Tapar Waripora

Versus
C.E.O Municipal Council Sopore/BDO Sangrama/BDO Sopore

(Registrar of Birth and Death) ...Non Applicant

NOTICE TO PUBLIC AT LARGE
Whereas, the above titled case is under process in this court, seeking direction therein to the non-applicant u/s 13(3) of the Registration of Births & Deaths Act, 1969 for registration of Birth event of the applicant's Daughter namely Aiza Rameez D/o: Rameez Ahmad Bhat as 07-02-2023 at M.C.H Sopore

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Rameez Ahmad Bhat S/o: Gh Mohd Bhat R/o: Tapar Waripora

Versus
C.E.O Municipal Council Sopore/BDO Sangrama/BDO Sopore

(Registrar of Birth and Death) ...Non Applicant

NOTICE TO PUBLIC AT LARGE
Whereas, the above titled case is under process in this court, seeking direction therein to the non-applicant u/s 13(3) of the Registration of Births & Deaths Act, 1969 for registration of Birth event of the applicant's Daughter namely Aksa Rameez D/o: Rameez Ahmad Bhat as 28-02-2020 at M.C.H Sopore

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Mehraj ud din Bhat S/o: Ghulam Mohammad Bhat R/o: Hathlangoo Tehsil Dangerpora

Versus
C.E.O Municipal Council Sopore/BDO Sangrama/BDO Sopore

(Registrar of Birth and Death) ...Non Applicant

NOTICE TO PUBLIC AT LARGE
Whereas, the above titled case is under process in this court, seeking direction therein to the non-applicant u/s 13(3) of the Registration of Births & Deaths Act, 1969 for registration of Birth event of the applicant's Daughter namely Roonak Jann D/o: Mehraj ud din Bhat as 29-09-2021 at Mother & Child Hospital Sopore.

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) DIVISION TANGMARG.

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

NIT No. 02/ OF RNB/ Tangmarg/2026-27/E-TENDERING/R&B/ DATED. 17.04.2026

The Upper Sealing for Inviting Stage Contract Shall Be Kept as Restricted Rs: 2.00 Lacs for Sr. 1
The Upper Sealing for Inviting Stage Contract Shall Be Kept as Restricted Rs: 4.00 Lacs for Sr. 2
The Upper Sealing for Inviting Stage Contract Shall Be Kept as Restricted Rs: 4.00 Lacs for Sr. 3

For and on behalf of the Government of UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage Rate Basis from Eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following work:-

S. No	Name of Work	Earnest money (In RS)	Cost of T/Doc. (In Rs.)	Time of completion	M.H of Account	Class of Contractor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Stage Contract for maintenance of Roads & Bridges (P/L of RCC pipes/Clearance of drains, repairs/ Renovation of drains, R/Walls, Slip clearance) in the jurisdiction of Sub-Division Gulmarg (2026-27).	4000/-	200/-	F.Y 2026-27	3054- M&R	DEE
2	Annual stage contract for the Maintenance of various roads and Buildings falling under the Jurisdiction of Sub-Division Kunzer (Stage contract - 2026-27)	8000/-	200/-	F.Y 2026-27	3054- M&R	DEE
3	Maintenance /Repair of various Roads/Bridges/culverts in the Jurisdiction of Sub-Division Tangmarg (Stage contract - 2026-27).	8000/-	200/-	F.Y 2026-27	3054- M&R	DEE

1. The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings (if any), bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.

inas per schedule of dates given below:-

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	17.04.2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	18.04.2026
3	Bid submission Start Date	18.04.2026
4	Bid Submission End Date	27.04.2026 upto 4.00 P.M
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	28.04.2026 at 11:00 AM in the office of the Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg

3. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Challan in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Tang-

marg (tender inviting authority) (The Date of Treasury Challan Should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date) pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender receiving authority).

4. All the Bidders have to submit and upload the Earnest money in the shape of CDR/ FDR as mentioned on above Table pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg

5. The Successful bidder will have to provide performance security with in 03 @ 5% of contract value and Additional Performance Security as per unbalance bid chart mentioned below in the form of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (tender receiving authority) as per rule-171 (I) of GFR 2017. The earnest money/ Bid security @2% shall be released to the successful bidder only on receipt of Performance Security and Additional Performance Security of Contract value which shall be released after successful completion of DLP /maintenance period and completion of work respectively.

6. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Tangmarg (Tender Receiving Authority).

7. The earnest money/ Bid security in favour of unsuccessful bidder shall be released only after submission of original Treasury Challan.

8. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids.

1.1 The earnest money shall be forfeited, if-

i. Any bidder/ tenderer withdraw his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or make any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.

ii. Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

iii. Failure of successfully bidder to submit the performance security & Additional Performance Security within the time period (as per JKPWD Engineering Manual 2020) i.e 21 Days from the issuance of latter of acceptance, after that the work will be put to fresh tenders without any notice to the contractor and the EMD will be forfeited.

34. All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25(Double agreement Form), NIT, GFR 2017 & JK PWD Engineering Manual 2020 and this office NIT No. 01/R&B/Tangmarg of 2026-27.

39. Any Typographical error in units shall be corrected and paid as per SSR of 2022.

40. As per the Circular No. 01 (Adm) FD of 2025 Dated: 08-07-2025 issued by Finance Department of UT J&K "Every participating supplier/ contractor to mandatorily disclose the bank account number which is linked with their GSTIN at the time of bid submission. No payments shall be released by the Government Department/Agency to any other bank account except the one linked with the GST registered number of the successful bidder".

No. R&B/Div./T/329-39
Dated: 17-04-2026

DIPK-529/26
DATED: 18-04-2026

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,

SEC Panchayat electoral rolls reviews revision



KT NEWS DESK

Udhampur, Apr 18: State Election Commissioner (SEC), Jammu & Kashmir, Shantmanu on Saturday conducted an extensive tour of Udhampur and Jammu districts to review the ongoing progress of the Revision of Panchayat Electoral Rolls-2026. During the visit, the State Election Commissioner inspected special camps at Panchayat Ghar Tikri, Mand East and West and Panchayat Ghar Garnai in Udhampur district besides Panchayat Ghar Jhajar Kotli, BDO offices Dansal and Nagrota in Jammu district.

The State Election Commissioner inspected the ongoing special camps and interacted with the Booth Level Officers, (BLOs), Panchayat Election Booth Officers (PEBOs) and members of the panchayats. He reviewed the status and progress of the revision exercise and sought feedback regarding the enrolment of newly eligible voters. Shantmanu also assessed the submission of forms related to inclusion, deletion, correction and transposition in the Panchayat electoral rolls. He directed the concerned officials to further intensify the outreach

during the revision period to identify all the eligible voters, facilitate registrations and ensure that no deserving voter is left out. Emphasizing the importance of the exercise, the State Election Commissioner stressed the need to ensure 100 percent inclusion of all eligible voters in the Panchayat electoral rolls, thereby strengthening transparency, accuracy and inclusiveness in the electoral process. During the tour, the State Election Commissioner also visited and inspected the Special Migrant Camps at Zonal Office Relief (Migrant), Udhampur and Jagti

Township Nagrota. He had feedback from the concerned authorities on the ongoing progress. The residents of Jagti Township also interacted with the State Election Commissioner and briefed him regarding the electoral roll process. The State Election Commissioner was accompanied by Secretary, State Election Commission, Susheel Kumar; ADC Jammu, Vidhu Shekhar; ADC Udhampur, Prem Singh; concerned BDOs and other senior officers and officials, besides former PRI members and local residents of the respective areas.

RFID smart management for Shri Machail Mata Yatra 2026

KT NEWS DESK

Kishtwar, Apr 18: The District Administration Kishtwar, under the supervision of the Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar and with execution led by the Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Pankaj Kumar Sharma, has announced comprehensive, technology-driven arrangements for the upcoming Shri Machail Mata Yatra, which commenced on the auspicious occasion of Vaisakhi on April 14.

The yatra marks the ceremonial return of the revered deity from the winter abode at the house of Pehalwan Singh to the main shrine. Addressing the media on Saturday, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kishtwar, Pawan Kotwal extended greetings to devotees and outlined a series of new measures designed to ensure a safe, smooth and efficiently managed pilgrimage. In a significant shift from previous years, the administration has made the entire registration process fully online and introduced a mandatory Radio Frequency Identification Device (RFID) system for all pilgrims. The earlier hybrid system has been discontinued, and devotees must now register through the official portal before undertaking the journey. During registration, pilgrims are required to upload their photograph, mobile number, and address, after which a unique travel ID is generated. RFID cards will be issued at designated centers upon verification, and the administration has made it clear that the rule of



"No RFID, No Darshan" will be strictly enforced throughout the yatra. To enhance safety and oversight, a 24/7 control room has been established at the SDM Office in Gulabgarh, equipped with advanced surveillance systems. Sensitive and high-traffic locations along the route, including Chashoti, Hummori, intermediate stretches and the Darshani Gate are being continuously monitored. Live surveillance feeds are accessible to senior officials, including the Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar and the Senior Superintendent of Police Kishtwar, enabling real-time supervision and rapid response to any situation. The administration has also deployed high-tech systems for crowd and traffic management, including AI-enabled video surveillance to monitor crowd density and public address systems for instant communication with pilgrims. Vehicle movement from Gulabgarh to key yatra points is being strictly regulated and drivers have been instructed to adhere to all safety guidelines,

particularly regarding passenger limits. A dedicated communication network has been established to ensure uninterrupted connectivity along the route, independent of third-party telecom providers and compliant with Department of Telecommunications norms. In addition, real-time weather alerts are being issued to help pilgrims plan their yatra safely and avoid potential risks. Pilgrims have been instructed to wear their RFID cards visibly at all times during the journey and to return them at designated exit points, especially at Gulabgarh, after completing darshan. The ADC emphasized that these initiatives represent a major step forward in ensuring pilgrim safety, improving operational efficiency and enabling real-time monitoring throughout the yatra. The shrine has remained open to devotees since April 14 and pilgrims are encouraged to take part in the sacred journey and seek blessings under the enhanced management system.

HC orders Darbar Move

Offices to close in Jammu on Apr-30, reopen in Srinagar on May-4



KNO

Jammu, Apr 18: The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh has ordered the annual Darbar Move of its main wing from Jammu to Srinagar for the summer season of 2026. According to an order several offices, including the main wing of the High Court, office of the Principal Secretary to the Chief Justice, Registrar Vigilance, Director of the J&K Judicial Academy, Registrar Rules, Registrar IT, and the Central Project Coordinator (e-Courts), will close in Jammu on April 30 after office hours and reopen in Srinagar on May 4 in the forenoon. The order further states that employees shifting as part of the move will be paid a special move allowance of Rs 25,000 each, while those failing to relocate within the prescribed time will not be eligible for the benefit—(KNO)

DC Srinagar assesses I&FC projects progress

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Apr 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Saturday chaired a comprehensive review meeting here at Meeting Hall of the DC Office complex to assess the progress of ongoing flood management projects and embankment strengthening works being undertaken to enhance the overall flood resilience of the River Jhelum and reinforce the district's preparedness. The meeting was attended by SSP SDRF, Masroor Ahmad Mir, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Aadil Fareed, Chief Planning Officer Srinagar, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintendent Engineer Hydraulic, Er. Ambreen Anjum, Joint Commissioner SMC, Suhail



Ul Islam, SDM, West, Irfan Bahadur, SDM East, Zubair Ahmad, Executive Engineer I&FC, Shuja Showkat, senior officers of SDRF & other concerned. At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner who is also the chairman District Disaster Management Authority was given a detailed overview about the flood mitigation

measures undertaken by the Irrigation & Flood Control (I&FC) Department, along with preparedness of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) Srinagar. On the occasion, the DC emphasized the

Police arrest 5 drug peddlers

KNO

Srinagar, Apr 18: Continuing its efforts under the Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan, J&K Police arrested 05 drug peddlers in multiple operations in Anantnag, Sopore and recovered significant quantity of contraband substances from their possession. According to a statement, in Anantnag, J&K Police has intensified its drive against drug peddling and narcotics smuggling, leading to the arrest of four accused persons and recovery of significant quantities of contraband substances. A Police party of Police Station Utrasool, during naka checking at Chatergul Chowk intercepted a vehicle (Alto) (JK03K 9820). During search, 1 kg Charas powder and 100 grams Charas balls was recovered. Accused namely Farooq Ahmad Khan son of Fazel Khan resident of Poshnari is government employee and is working as class 4th in Vailoo court. Moreover, Acting on reliable information, a police team

from Police Station Aishmuqam conducted a raid at the residence of Salman Saleem Rather son of Mohd Saleem Rather resident of Diyaroo in presence of an Executive Magistrate. During search, 2,590 kgs of crushed charas-like substance (Bhang Bhoosa) was recovered. In another operation, a police party from PS mattan during naka checking at Bumzoo KP Road near Foot Bridge Nambal, intercepted a suspicious person namely Aaqib Ahmad Shah son of Gh Hassan Shah resident of Shaksaz Mohalla Seer Hamdan. During search of his bag, 3 kgs of grinded cannabis leaves, flowers and seeds was recovered. In a separate action, on specific input, a police party from PS Bijbehara, conducted a raid at the residence of Irfan Gani Kandroo son of Abdul Gani Kandroo resident of Ader Bijbehara. During search, 5.03 kgs of charas powder-like substance was recovered from his residential house. Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Transporters call valley-wide Chakka Jam on Apr-20

REHAN QAYOUM MIR

Srinagar, Apr 18: Kashmir's transport sector on Saturday announced a complete valley-wide chakka jam on Monday, April 20, escalating concerns over the government's expansion of Smart City bus services into district routes. The protest, called by the All Jammu and Kashmir Transport Welfare Association, comes amid growing resentment among private transport operators who say the extension of Smart City buses beyond Srinagar city limits is directly threatening the survival of thousands of families dependent on buses, sumos, taxis and mini-passenger vehicles. Speaking to reporters in Srinagar, Transport Association Kashmir President Shabir Matta said the private transport

sector has been pushed into crisis due to policy decisions taken without proper consultation with stakeholders. He alleged that the introduction of Smart City buses in routes covering Pulwama, Kangan, Sopore, Magam and other districts has created unequal competition, particularly for small and mid-scale transporters already burdened by loan liabilities, fuel prices, maintenance costs and declining passenger volume. He said many operators had hoped the government would regulate route allocations in a balanced manner, but instead, public buses were introduced on routes where private operators had traditionally depended for income. Matta further said the transporters are not opposing development or modern public transport systems, but

are demanding a policy framework that protects those already working in the sector. Repeated assurances from authorities regarding permit rationalisation, fleet regulation and operational coordination were never implemented, leading to frustration among unions," he said. The association said Monday's shutdown is only the first step and warned that if authorities fail to respond, transport bodies from north, south, and central Kashmir will jointly decide the next phase of agitation. "That could include indefinite strikes, route blockades, coordinated demonstrations and legal action," he said. Transport leaders protest is aimed at highlighting "policy failures" rather than creating inconvenience. Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

South Kashmir athletes demand upgraded sports infra

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Anantnag, Apr 18: Athletes from south Kashmir's Anantnag and Pulwama districts have raised concerns over inadequate sports infrastructure. They have called on authorities to urgently upgrade facilities at local stadiums to support the region's growing sporting talent. Players from Anantnag said the existing ground in the main town is too small to accommodate multiple sports, leading to frequent clashes between cricket and football activities. They said hundreds of athletes, including those involved in cricket, football, and volleyball, rely on the same limited space. "This stadium has been undergoing construction for a long time, due to which athletes are unable to play their games there," Shakeel Ahmad, a local cricketer said. He said whenever



football matches are held at the ground near Lal Chowk, cricket players are left with no space to practice, he said. "The stadium is too small and cannot even cater to one sport properly, let alone multiple games." The sportspersons sought dedicated infrastructure for each sport. "Either this ground should be reserved for one game, or separate facilities must be developed so that all players can train without disruption," Shakeel added. Echoing similar concerns, Sameer Ahmad, a football player from Anantnag, said the lack of proper infrastructure is not only affecting sports but also social well-being. "Our youth are talented, but without proper facilities, their energy is not channelled. More sports infrastructure can help keep them away from drugs and other harmful activities," he said. Athletes claimed that the issue has

been brought to the notice of authorities several times, but no concrete action has been taken so far. Meanwhile, players from Pulwama also demanded separate facilities for separate games so that athletes can practice well and perform well. They acknowledged that in recent few years the government has taken many steps in this regard, but said more needs to be done in this regard. The athletes from both districts appealed to the government to take immediate steps to address these issues. They said that with proper infrastructure, local talent can excel and represent the region at national and international levels. "South Kashmir has immense sporting potential. All we need is the right support and facilities to prove our mettle," the athletes said—(KNO)

Nari Shakti At The Heart Of New India's MSME Revolution

90% credit guarantee. 100% subsidy on certification. 3.5% govt procurement from women-owned MSMEs. India cannot rise unless its women rise with it.

Shobha Karandlaje

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi stood before Parliament and championed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam in September 2023, reserving one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislatures for women, he articulated a conviction that India cannot rise unless its women rise with it. That same intent is visible every single day in the work done by Government in MSME sector.

The MSME sector is often called the backbone of India's economy. But if we look closely, at its heart stands the quiet force of women entrepreneurs. And today, that quiet force is finally receiving national recognition, institutional support, and policy momentum it has always deserved.

The Numbers Tell the Story
The scale of women's participation in India's MSME ecosystem is constantly expanding. As of early 2026, over 3.11 crore women-led enterprises stand registered on the Udyam Registration Portal and the Udyam Assist Platform. In fact, as per Udyam and Udyam Assist registrations, women-owned enterprises account for approximately 40% of all registered MSMEs in the country and play a significant role in employment generation. One of the most consequential reforms for women entrepreneurs has been the simplification of registration through the Udyam Registration Portal. Fully online, paperless, and based on self-declaration, it removed the bureaucratic gate keeping that disproportionately disadvantaged woman. The Udyam Assist Platform, launched in January 2023, went further in reaching women in the informal economy who lacked PAN or GSTIN, and brought them within the embrace of Priority Sector Lending and government scheme benefits.

This is the direct result of a government that chose to place women at the centre of its economic agenda as drivers of growth.

Nari Shakti as Economic Force
Prime Minister Modi has consistently emphasized that empowering women is not a social obligation but is a national strategy. In his own words, when women are empowered, families are empowered, and when families are empowered, the nation grows from strength to strength.

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam is the most visible expression of this philosophy



in the political sphere. But in the economic sphere especially in the MSME sector, the government's commitment to women has been translated into a comprehensive, multi-pronged policy framework that touches credit, skill, market access, recognition, and dignity.

A Policy Architecture Built for Women
The Ministry of MSME has systematically woven women's empowerment into every major programme and scheme it runs.

Together, they support entrepreneurs through eight key intervention categories on the supply side: access to technology, access to credit and finance, promoting digitalization, infrastructure support, formalization and inclusion, access to market, and industry-grade skilling.

Over 3.2 lakh women-owned enterprises have been supported under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) over the past five years. As of recent data, 39% of all PMEGP beneficiaries are women which are a

testament to both the scheme's design and women's hunger to build.

The Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) offers women borrowers enhanced guarantee cover of up to 90%, making banks more willing to extend credit without collateral demands.

Further, the Public Procurement Policy was amended to mandate that Central Ministries, Departments, and Public Sector Enterprises procure at least 3% of their annual procurement from women-owned micro and small enterprises. This creates a guaranteed, predictable market for women entrepreneurs' thereby converting government spending into women's business growth. It is encouraging to note that in financial year 2025-26, 3.5% of the total procurement by Central Ministries / Departments / Central Public Sector Enterprises was from women MSMEs.

Under the ZED (Zero Defect Zero Effect) Certification scheme, women-owned MSMEs receive 100% subsidy on certification

costs. These details matter and they show the efforts of a Ministry that has thought carefully about where women face barriers and has placed targeted support at precisely those pressure points.

The Mahila Coir Yojana offers exclusive skill development and financial support to women artisans in the coir sector. Special focus is being given to handhold women for marketing preparedness through MSME-TEAM (Trade Enablement and Marketing) under which 50% of its 5 lakh beneficiary have been targeted to be women. The Yashasvini Campaign runs dedicated nationwide awareness drives to inform women about MSME schemes and registration benefits. Under the special MSME Idea Hackathon 3.0 organised for women entrepreneurs alone, over 18,888 ideas were received which clearly shows an overflow of creative and entrepreneurial energy waiting for an outlet.

Additionally, the ministry has a dedicated Women Entrepreneurship Cell (WEC),

which serves as the nodal point for advancing women's entrepreneurship by coordinating across schemes, monitoring and assessing outcomes for women, and engaging with ecosystem stakeholders.

All such initiatives have focused on gender targeting and convergence and reflect a trajectory from women's inclusion as a subsidy provision within individual schemes toward a more deliberate, cross-cutting architecture for gender-responsive entrepreneurship support.

Skill, Confidence, Community
Beyond credit and markets, the government has recognized that entrepreneurship is also a matter of skill and confidence. In the North-East, where women have traditionally been the economic backbone of their communities, targeted Entrepreneurship Development Programmes have ensured women form the majority of trained participants.

Self-Help Groups have been integrated with MSME support ecosystems, creating communities of women entrepreneurs who support each other, building not just businesses but networks of mutual strength.

This is a government in forward motion. Each budget, each scheme, each portal simplification is a brick in an edifice that Prime Minister Modi began constructing with a simple but radical premise that India's women are a potential to be unleashed.

The Spirit of Nari Shakti in Every Enterprise

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam told the world that India's women belong in its Parliament. The MSME policies of this Government are telling the world that India's women belong in its marketplaces, its factories, its export chains, its innovation hubs, and its boardrooms.

These are two expressions of the same truth that Prime Minister Modi has made the cornerstone of his vision for a Viksit Bharat by 2047. A developed India is an India where more than 3 crore women entrepreneurs (and still counting) are the very engine of development.

We are not there yet. But under this Government's watch, and with this Prime Minister's commitment, we are unmistakably on our way.

The author is Union Minister of State, Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises and Labour & Employment

Diaspora Can Fuel India's Export Growth

A few years ago, India set itself a bold target: \$2 trillion total exports by 2030, split evenly between goods and services.

Sukhpal Ahluwalia

A few years ago, India set itself a bold target: \$2 trillion total exports by 2030, split evenly between goods and services. While recent remarks from Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal suggest the target could slip to 2032, there are still grounds for optimism. While recent landmark trade deals with the EU and US will bring us closer to that goal by increasing market access, agreements alone do not equal exports.

The challenge lies in turning access to sustained growth, and this requires something less visible than trade agreements, but equally as powerful: trust and knowledge. This is where India's extensive network of diaspora entrepreneurs can play a decisive role in accelerating exports. The Indian diaspora is the largest in the world, and I'm proud to be a part of it. As I spend more time on the ground and begin to think about the long-term role I want to play when I retire to India, I find myself increasingly drawn to building and strengthening the bridges that connect India with the wider world.

And I'm not alone in that belief. I've spoken to so many diaspora entrepreneurs and leaders who feel similarly; that those of us living and working abroad have a responsibility to use our positions to deepen the connections between Indian businesses and global investors, partners, and markets. The



Indian diaspora is an underutilised asset. Embedded in foreign markets worldwide, they offer two distinct advantages: a practical understanding of how those markets function, and established credibility within them.

This means they can help Indian firms get to grips with a foreign market and build trust with prospective buyers. While all first-time exporters would benefit from the experience and connections of diaspora entrepreneurs, it is India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that stand to gain the most. Less than 1.5 per cent of

India's MSMEs are exporting (PwC), despite accounting for 46 per cent of India's total exports last year. Expanding the pool of exporting MSMEs represents a clear avenue for export growth. They're held back by limited market knowledge and difficulties building trusted networks and finding first buyers.

Diaspora entrepreneurs can help address each of these in turn. The first way that diaspora entrepreneurs can help is by closing the knowledge gap that confronts Indian firms when they first look to export to foreign markets. Unfamiliar and complex regulations, standards, and procurement rules

act as a friction on export growth, slowing businesses down – or deterring them from exporting altogether. Navigating these rules requires an understanding of foreign markets that many MSMEs lack, but which diaspora entrepreneurs understand intimately.

They are familiar not only with regulatory requirements but also with the cultural expectations that shape negotiations, payment terms, and risk assessments. By sharing this insight, they can help Indian firms shorten the learning curve associated with exporting, helping their products reach foreign markets sooner. That acceleration matters if India is to make sustained progress towards its export target. The second way diaspora entrepreneurs can bring India closer to the 2030 export target is by helping first-time exporters build trust in foreign markets. Trust is a critical asset in export markets. It impacts buyers' perceived risk, which, in turn, affects their willingness to buy from exporters. It's a luxury that first-time exporters lack.

However strong their product, they enter new markets without a track record on delivery, quality, or reliability. Diaspora entrepreneurs can bridge that credibility gap. By vouching for Indian suppliers, embedding them into trusted distribution systems, or even acting as first buyers themselves, they reduce the perceived risk of engagement. In doing so, they help firms secure their first contracts – often the hardest to win. This

creates the reference points needed for continued export growth. The remaining question is not whether diaspora entrepreneurs are willing to help. I think it's whether India can coordinate that willingness effectively.

From my conversations with fellow diaspora entrepreneurs, I've found a clear appetite to support Indian businesses. For many, it's both a way of contributing to India's growth and an opportunity to deepen commercial ties with the country. But often what is missing is clarity: which firms to support, and how. There are some relatively simple interventions that could help bridge that gap. Targeted diaspora-MSME networks or mentorship programmes formalise knowledge sharing, while structured matchmaking platforms could connect diaspora entrepreneurs with relevant Indian firms.

This would create clearer pathways for diaspora leaders to act as first buyers or introduce Indian firms to their existing networks. The export target is ambitious but achievable, provided India mobilises the experience and influence of India's diaspora. Trade policy opens markets; diaspora networks help firms compete within them. If India wants to see \$2 trillion in exports by 2030, it needs both.

The writer is an Indian entrepreneur, executive and investor based in London. This article first appeared on www.thestatesman.com

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

Govt committed to grassroots engagement, outreach programmes: Deputy CM



KT News Desk

NOWSHERA, APRIL 18: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, Saturday continued his extensive public outreach programme across Nowshera, holding a series of public interaction sessions and inspections to address the public issues and concerns and review the ongoing development works.

During the outreach programme, the Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, visited Panchayat Chowki, Handan, Kalsian, Langer, Panchayat Bhawani, Janghar, Laroka, Killa Darhal and Lambri, where he interacted with the local residents and met various public delegations. At these locations, several delegations called on the Deputy Chief Minister, highlighting the local concerns and developmental needs. He assured them of timely and amicable resolution of their genuine issues.

The Deputy Chief Minister listened to their grievances and demands besides seeking feedback on implementation of development works in their respective areas. He assured them that their issues would be taken up with the concerned

authorities for a speedy redress.

The Deputy Chief Minister also reviewed the progress of the ongoing development works at Langer Dhanaka. He stressed strict adherence to the set quality standards and directed the officials to ensure timely completion of all the projects.

Earlier, he inspected the Bharat Gas Agency at Nowshera to assess service delivery and operational efficiency. He laid emphasis on ensuring uninterrupted and timely LPG supply while maintaining transparency and enhancing consumer satisfaction.

Reiterating the Government's commitment to grassroots engagement, the Deputy Chief Minister said that such outreach programmes are vital for strengthening the public trust and ensuring that development initiatives are aligned with the needs and aspirations of the people.

He further directed the concerned officers to remain proactive in addressing the public grievances, ensuring that all developmental works are executed efficiently and within stipulated timelines.

Senior officers accompanied the Deputy Chief Minister during the public outreach.

Sakeena Itoo lays foundation stones for key development projects in Kulgam

Highlights Govt's continued support for sports, youth engagement activities

KT News Desk

KULGAM, APRIL 18: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo Saturday laid foundation stones for several key developmental projects in Kulgam district and also dedicated vital infrastructure to the public. MLA, Kulgam, M.Y. Tarigami; Mission Director ICDS, Director AYUSH, ADC Kulgam, senior officers of district administration, other sectoral officers and large number of locals were also present on the occasion.

In line with the Government's sustained push for inclusive and equitable development across Jammu & Kashmir, the Minister laid foundation stone for 'Viksit Village' at Yarikah-A, D.H Pora.

Speaking on the occasion, Sakeena Itoo, as per an official statement, said that under this flagship initiative, rural infrastructure will be improved, besides basic amenities will be significantly enhanced to transform this village into a self-reliant and sustainable place.

"Government is prioritizing rural transformation through targeted investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and social welfare", she stated.

She added that this initiative reflects the Government's approach towards grassroots-focused development strategy.

Afterwards, the Minister also laid the foundation stone for the construction and upgradation of the Chiripora-Trengabal road under the Public Works (R&B) department at an approximate cost of Rs. 2 crores.

Addressing the locals after foundation laying ceremony, the Minister said that this



project is expected to significantly improve accessibility, reduce travel time and open new avenues for economic growth and service delivery in these areas.

Highlighting various achievements of Omar Abdullah led Government, Sakeena Itoo maintained that the Government is committed to equitable development of Jammu and Kashmir, with particular focus on rural and peripheral areas.

She outlined that the Government has accelerated rollout of rural road connectivity projects, expansion of educational infrastructure, strengthening healthcare facilities, and enhanced social security coverage to ensure that development benefits reach every section of society. She further underscored that special focus is being laid on bridging developmental gaps in remote and

underserved areas. Later, the Minister also inaugurated a 100-bedded Girls' Hostel (KGBV - Type IV) at Kulgam, aimed at promoting access to education for girls from far-flung and disadvantaged areas.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the hostel represents a significant step towards empowering girl students by reducing dropout rates and encouraging higher enrolment in secondary and higher secondary education. She reiterated that the Government is committed to further expanding such facilities across Jammu and Kashmir to ensure equitable access to education for all.

The Minister also directed the concerned authorities to ensure the provision of modern amenities, quality services, and safe environment for girl students, to ensure it becomes

safe, secure, and quality residential accommodation.

Meanwhile, Sakeena Itoo also inaugurated Ayush Dispensary at Wovri Khull as well as building for Higher Secondary School at Khull D.H Pora.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister reaffirmed the Government's long-term vision, stating that sustained efforts are underway to build robust infrastructure, promote gender equity in education, and create livelihood opportunities, thereby ensuring comprehensive and inclusive growth across Jammu & Kashmir.

She emphasized that these initiatives are part of the government's broader vision to ensure equitable growth, improved public services, and enhanced quality of life for people in rural and underserved areas. She reiterated that the administration remains steadfast in its commitment to fast-tracking development works while ensuring transparency and accountability at every level.

Later, the Minister also visited Ardpura Khull, and witnessed the final match of Shaheed Wali Mohammad Itoo Memorial Cricket Tournament.

Interacting with the players on the occasion, Sakeena Itoo underscored the importance of sports in fostering discipline, teamwork, and a healthy lifestyle among young people. She assured participants continued government support for the promotion of sports infrastructure and youth engagement activities across the district.

She also distributed trophies among the Champion and runner up teams, as well as medallions among other top performers of the tournament.

Dr. Farooq extends heartfelt greetings to Hujjaj-e-Kiram



KT News Desk

Srinagar, 18 Apr: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference President Dr. Farooq Abdullah Saturday extended his heartfelt greetings and best wishes to all Hujjaj-e-Kiram from Jammu and Kashmir and rest of the country, embarking on the sacred journey of the Annual Hajj pilgrimage to the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah.

Issuing a party statement, he said that Hajj is a profound act of worship that embodies faith, sacrifice, patience and unity among Muslims across the world.

Dr. Farooq appealed to the Hujjaj-e-Kiram to remember the entire humanity in their special prayers, particularly praying for global peace and harmony.

He further requested the pilgrims to especially pray for the peace, unity, and prosperity of the Muslim Ummah, so that it may continue to thrive in compassion, dignity and mutual understanding.

He concluded by praying that Allah Almighty accepts the Hajj of all pilgrims, grants them ease and safety in their journey and blesses them with a spiritually enriched and safe return.

100 DAYS NASHA UKT J&K ABHIYAAN

Sticker pasting, awareness drive in Shopian

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, APRIL 18: In continuation of the ongoing 100 Days Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyaan, District Administration Shopian Saturday launched a sticker pasting and awareness drive in Shopian aimed at sensitizing transporters and the general public about the dangers of drug abuse.

The initiative, as per an official statement, was formally inaugurated by the Additional District Development Commissioner Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone, at Sumo Stand Gagren, where awareness stickers carrying anti drug messages were pasted on commercial vehicles to promote widespread public awareness.

The drive driven by the Department of Social Welfare and Motor Vehicles, specifically targeting drivers and transport operators, recognizing their crucial role in community outreach and daily public interaction.

The initiative forms part of a series of ongoing efforts by the district administration to strengthen public awareness and ensure wider outreach of the campaign, with a focus on preventive measures and community participation to curb drug abuse.

Dy.SP Headquarters, Imtiaz Ahmad Mir, District Social Welfare Officer Shopian, Ibrar Hussain, and other officials were also present on the occasion.

District level awareness programme held at GDC Shopian

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, APRIL 18: As part of the ongoing 100 Days Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir campaign, a grand district level awareness programme on drug abuse was conducted Saturday at Government Degree College Shopian.

Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone, attended the event as Chief Guest.

The ADDC, as per an official statement, in his address, emphasized the critical role of parents, teachers, and society in protecting youth from drug addiction.

He called for a coordinated and proactive approach at the grassroots level, focusing on awareness, guidance, and early intervention.

The programme was attended by Principal GDC Shopian, Prof Tariq Ahmad Mir, civil society members, representatives of traders associations, vendors, drivers, ASHA workers, students, and officials from various departments.

CEO, Municipal Council Shopian, Suhail Ahmad, delivered the welcome address and highlighted the broader social importance of the campaign.



He stated that the fight against drug abuse must evolve beyond a government initiative into a people's movement, requiring collective ownership and sustained public participation.

He emphasized that meaningful success can only be achieved when all sections of society work together in a coordinated manner.

Dr. Ishrat Jabeen, Clinical Physiologist, spoke on the concept of substance abuse, outlining its causes and adverse health implications.

She emphasized the need for awareness, early identification, and preventive interventions to reduce the growing risk of addiction, particularly among youth.

Dr. Muzaffar Ahmad, Psychologist, presented a detailed analysis of the psychological aspects of drug abuse.

He explained why individuals turn to drugs, discussed commonly abused substances and their classifications, and elaborated on the short term and long term effects on the human body and mind.

Through real life case examples and emotionally engaging narratives, he provided a stark insight into the consequences of addiction, reinforcing the urgency of timely intervention.

A short awareness film depicting the realities of drug abuse was screened during the programme, further sensitizing participants and strengthening the impact of the session.

Dy.SP Hqr Shopian, Imtiaz Ahmad Mir, addressed the gathering from a law enforcement perspective. He highlighted ongoing efforts by police to curb drug trafficking and take strict action against peddlers.

He stressed the importance of public cooperation in reporting drug related activities and reiterated that community vigilance is essential to dismantle the supply chain.

It was also highlighted that GDC Shopian has taken several concrete measures including constitution of monitoring cell, installation of CCTV cameras within the college premises, regular organization of awareness programmes, pledge ceremonies, and student engagement initiatives to ensure continuous vigilance against drug abuse.

GDC Qazigund organises Kabaddi match

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, APRIL 18: As a part of 100-day Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA), the College Well-Being & Anti-Substance Abuse Cell of Government Degree College (GDC) Qazigund, organized a friendly Kabaddi match to raise awareness among the students to curb the menace of drug abuse.

The activity, as per an official statement, witnessed an enthusiastic and active participation of the sports persons of the college. Anti-drug slogans were also displayed by the students to support the event.

A pledge was also administered to all the staff and students in this connection.

College Principal, Prof. Sudhir Singh, in his address expressed concerns over the involvement of youth in drugs' network, as is being unleashed during the NMBA campaign. "Sports can play a surprisingly strong role in preventing substance use—especially among young people—because they shape daily habits, identity, and social circles in such ways that make risky behaviours less appealing or harder to sustain. Positive peer influence can reduce the likelihood of experimenting with harmful substances," he added.

Those who were prominently present on the occasion include Prof. Aufaq Zargar, Prof. Talib Ahmad, Prof. Irshad Ahmed and Prof. Rameez Ahmed.

Intensified awareness drive continues across Baramulla

KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, APRIL 18: As part of the ongoing 100 Days Intensified Campaign under Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan, a series of impactful awareness and outreach activities were carried out across District Baramulla to reinforce the message of a drug-free society.

Continuing the district-wide efforts, multiple programmes were organized to engage different sections of the community and spread awareness about the harmful effects of substance abuse.

In a significant initiative, the Psychiatry Department of Government Medical College (GMC) Baramulla conducted a day-long interactive session with individuals who have successfully recovered from substance abuse.



The session, as per an official statement, provided a platform for open dialogue, where participants shared their personal journeys, challenges, and the importance of timely intervention, counselling, and community support in overcoming addiction.

Simultaneously, a number of awareness programmes and rallies were conducted across

various educational institutions in collaboration with the Police Department where students were sensitized about the dangers of drug abuse, legal implications, and the importance of making informed life choices.

Adding further momentum to the campaign, Municipal Council Baramulla and Municipal Council Sopore, in collaboration with the Information Department Baramulla, conducted extensive Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities through mobile IEC vans.

These vans traversed key areas of the towns throughout the day, disseminating awareness messages through audio-visual content, and public announcements, ensuring maximum outreach among the general public.

Awareness programme at Hardpanzoo, Khansahib

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, APRIL 18: As part of the ongoing 100-day intensive Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA), a mega awareness programme was Saturday organised at Higher Secondary School Hardpanzoo in Sub-Division Khansahib.

The event, as per an official statement, was presided over by the Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan.

The programme witnessed the presence of SDM Khansahib, Jahangir Giri, ACP Budgam, District Information Officer Budgam, District Social Welfare Officer Budgam, Tehsildar Khag, BDO concerned, and other officers.

A large gathering of students from various schools across the sub-division actively participated in the event, reflecting

strong public engagement in the anti-drug campaign.

On the occasion, the DC inspected paintings prepared by school children on the theme of Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan and appreciated their creative expression and awareness on the issue.

A plantation drive was also carried out within the school premises, symbolizing a commitment towards a healthy and sustainable future.

Students also presented cultural programmes delivering powerful messages against drug abuse and advocating for a drug-free Budgam.

Addressing the gathering, the DC emphasized that eradication of the drug menace cannot be achieved by any single individual and requires collective and collaborative efforts of all stakeholders.

He urged the public, especially the youth, to stand united against substance abuse and actively contribute towards building a drug-free society. He further stated that the District Administration and Police are working in close coordination to eliminate the menace from its roots.

Highlighting the comprehensive approach adopted under the 100-day action plan, he informed that strong rehabilitation mechanisms have also been put in place. The Drug Dependence Centre at the District Headquarters is functioning 24x7, while the Addiction Treatment Facility (ATF) at District Hospital Budgam is actively providing counselling and treatment services to those in need.

The DC also stressed the importance of post-rehabilitation support, stating that efforts are being made to reintegrate affected individuals into society by making them productive through various employment-generating schemes such as Mission YUVA, PMEGP, and HADP.

The DC also highlighted that similar awareness programmes and activities under the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan are being conducted across all educational institutions, colleges, ITIs, line departments, blocks, panchayats, and municipalities throughout Budgam district to ensure widespread outreach and community participation.

The DC said that these programmes gave a message of renewed commitment from all stakeholders to intensify efforts and work collectively towards a healthier, drug-free Budgam.

Special Relief Scheme: Ration distribution for migrants begins across Jammu Province



KT News Desk

Jammu, Apr 18: The government on Saturday commenced distribution of ration under the Special Relief Ration Scheme for Kashmiri and Jammu migrants as notified vide Government Order No. 15-JK(FCS&CA) of 2026 dated March 5, 2026.

The distribution was launched simultaneously at 32 ration depots earmarked for migrants in District Jammu, besides designated depots in other districts of Jammu province.

As per the existing scale, all relief ration card holders—irrespective of categorization into PHH, NPHH or Special categories—will continue to receive 11 kg of free ration per person per month along with 1 kg of sugar. Beneficiaries registered with the Relief Organization under the non-relief category

(including pensioners) and falling under the NPHH category will receive ration at government-approved rates as per their entitlement under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Director, Food and Civil Supplies, Jammu, R.K. Shavan, and Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner, Dr. Arvind Karwani, along with senior officers, visited various ration depots at Jagti, Nagrota, Muthi-Buta Nagar and Purkhoo migrant camps to oversee the distribution process. The step taken by the Government was highly appreciated by the migrant community.

During the visits, Director Food and Civil Supplies, Jammu issued instructions to the concerned officials to ensure smooth and hassle-free distribution of ration to all the

eligible beneficiaries. He further directed to expedite completion of e-KYC formalities for all pending Relief Ration Card holders, with necessary facilities to remain available at all depots.

Pertinent to mention that the Government has amended the Jammu & Kashmir Food Security Rules, 2021 and the Targeted Public Distribution (Control) Order, 2023 vide S.O. 392 and S.O. 393 dated August 13, 2024, enabling integration of Migrant Ration Cards with the NFSA database. This step allows migrants to avail benefits under various government schemes.

Zonal Officers and Camp Commandants have been asked to reach out to all eligible beneficiaries and assist them in applying online for various welfare schemes.

Rana visits GDC Mendhar, reviews infrastructure, facilities



KT News Desk

Mendhar, Apr 18: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, on Saturday visited Chhote Shah Government Degree College Mendhar, where he conducted a detailed review of the institution's infrastructure and facilities being extended to the students and the staff. He interacted with the faculty to assess the status of the academic and administrative needs and services.

During the inspection, the Minister took stock of critical gaps in the existing facilities and directed for identifying the upgradation requirements so the same can be addressed at the earliest. He counted the government initiatives being implemented to strengthen the academic institutions in

remote and border areas. The focus of the administration is on enhancing the infrastructure, expanding the resources and fostering a more enabling environment for the students, he added.

During his visit, the Minister also met with the delegation of academic arrangement faculty who submitted a memorandum outlining their concerns related to salary structure, designation and overall service conditions.

The Minister assured the delegation that their legitimate issues would be taken up with the concerned authorities for timely and appropriate action.

The Minister said the progress of institutions like GDC Mendhar remains central to the government's broader vision of equitable access to quality education across the region.

Minister Dar seeks enhancement of MGNREGA wage rates in hilly regions

Attends review meeting with Union RDD Minister Shivraj Chouhan



KT News Desk

Srinagar, Apr 18: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, on Saturday participated in an online review meeting convened by Union Minister for Rural Development Department, Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

The meeting was held with Ministers in charge of Rural Development from States and Union Territories to review the status of implementation of MGNREGA and seek suggestions for The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) which is

being rolled out for implementation shortly.

During the deliberations, Javid Dar raised key issues concerning Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the need for enhancement of MGNREGA wage rates in hilly regions from Rs 272 to Rs 311, keeping in view the unique geographical and economic conditions of the area.

He said the revision should be in line with the Minimum Wages framework and sought adequate financial support from the Government of India for clearing the pending material liabilities as the system is transitioning towards implementation of new framework under VB G RAM G Mission.

Iran says it is reviewing new proposals put forward by US

AP

Dubai, Apr 18: Iran on Saturday said that it is reviewing new proposals put forward by the US. Iran's Supreme National Security Council said in a statement that Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir, serving as an intermediary, presented the proposals to Iran when he recently visited Tehran, and they were still under review.

It was not revealed what was in the proposals. The council said Iran has yet to respond, but further talks would require the US to abandon "excessive demands and adjust its requests to the realities on the ground."

It also said that Iran will maintain full control over traffic through the Strait of Hormuz until "the war fully ends and lasting peace is achieved in the region," adding that it would collect detailed information on passing vessels, issue transit certificates and impose tolls.

The council added that it considered the US naval blockade a violation of the ceasefire, and there would be no reopening of the Strait of Hormuz until that was lifted. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said that US talks with Iran are going well and that he expects to have more information "by the end of the day".

Trump made the comments Saturday morning during a White House event where he signed an executive order directing the Food and Drug Administration to expedite review of certain psychedelic drugs designed as breakthrough therapy for mental illness.

Trump declined to take reporters' questions about Iran but said, "We have very good conversations going on." He says Iran "got a little cute," later adding, "They wanted to close up the strait again," referring to the Strait of Hormuz.

Bandipora launches 'Dosti Discussion Series' across schools to combat drug abuse

DC administers anti-drug pledge, interacts with students, residents

KT News Desk

Bandipora, Apr 18: In a significant community outreach under the 100-Day Mission Mode campaign of the Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan, the District Administration Bandipora on Saturday took the fight against drug abuse to the grassroots by organising a "Dosti Discussion" at Higher Secondary School Aragam, focusing on the transformative role of peer groups in preventing substance abuse among youth.

Saturday's session at HSS Aragam marks the beginning of a district-wide series. The District Administration has planned "Dosti Discussions" across every High and Higher Secondary School in Bandipora during the 100-day campaign, ensuring that no school and no student is left out of the conversation.

The session witnessed active participation from students, parents, and local residents, setting a tone that was less of administrative instruction and more of collective dialogue.

Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib administered the anti-drug pledge and engaged in an open and



candid interaction with the audience. She listened attentively to public concerns, assured administrative support, and went a step further by sharing her personal contact details, encouraging people to report drug peddling, seek help for affected individuals, or offer suggestions.

"The time for action has come," the DC said, stressing that drug abuse is no longer an individual issue but a societal emergency requiring a unified response.

The DC urged the community to display anti-drug messages prominently at mosques, schools, and other public spaces, and called upon families, educational institutions, religious

holistic development is key to nurturing confident and capable individuals.

The District Administration reiterated its zero-tolerance approach, stating that strict action will be taken against those involved in drug peddling, reinforcing that community engagement and enforcement will go hand in hand.

Principal, HSS Aragam, Mohammad Syed Mir, described the occasion as a historic step for Aragam, a community, he said, consciously moving towards a drug-free Jammu & Kashmir.

Participants expressed appreciation for the initiative and pledged full cooperation. The programme concluded with a shared resolve to strengthen peer support systems and work collectively towards a drug-free Bandipora.

The "Dosti Discussion" series forms a key component of the District Administration Bandipora's 100-day IEC and outreach calendar under the Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan, scheduled from April 15 to July 23, 2026, with sessions planned across all High and Higher Secondary Schools in the district.

District Admin Bandipora organises awareness progs under Nasha Mukta Abhiyan

KT News Desk

Bandipora, Apr 18: As part of the ongoing Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir Abhiyan, the District Administration Bandipora organised a series of drug awareness programmes across educational institutions in the district, aimed at sensitising students about the harmful effects of substance abuse.

The programmes featured screening of awareness films, short videos and documentaries in PM SHRI HSS Shadipora, GHS Hajin, HSS PTL Gurez, HSS Nowgam, HS Jurniyal, HS Ketson, HS Odina, HSS Chuntimulla, HSS Hajin, HS Achora, GHS Nadihal, HSS Mantrigam, GHSS Gadakhud Sonawari, HS Panar, Government High School Ahmisharief, HS Kanzalwan, PM SHRI GHS Sumbal, HS Kehnusa, HS Tarabal and HS Malangam. The films highlighted the physical, psychological and social consequences of drug abuse, including its impact on health, families and society. Students actively participated in discussions, listened to awareness talks by teachers, also took pledges to remain drug-free.

Similarly, Government Degree College Sumbal organised an awareness talk and an interactive session under the Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir Abhiyan (Dosti Initiative). The awareness session sensitised students about the harmful physical, psychological and social effects of substance abuse, while emphasising the role of positive peer influence and informed choices.

Meanwhile, interactive session was conducted, wherein students actively engaged in discussions on drug-related concerns and their wider societal impact.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Not all wars

anchors Drug-Free J&K campaign and he considers that prevention is mightier than any cure in such cases.

"We must reach our children before drugs do, igniting awareness and self-respect in every school, college, playground, and community hub," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He also called upon J&K Police and other enforcement agencies to ensure exemplary punishment for drug smugglers. "Make sure no culprit escapes. We should unleash exemplary crackdowns on traffickers poisoning our youth. Those ruining generations won't slip away," the Lieutenant Governor said further adding that administration has crafted an SOP to obliterate drug smugglers networks and ensuring swift justice.

The Lieutenant Governor said that from detection and counseling to detox, rehab, and aftercare, our pledge is total rehabilitation. He asked the officials to audit weekly activities including list of rehabbed lives, list of arrested smugglers while ensuring that fake centers are shuttered.

"We will restore people's dignity, reconnect them to our shared society, and unleash their potential to build Rajouri's brighter future. This mission demands more than government efforts. I call upon every social organization and NGOs to join us in this noble endeavor," the Lieutenant Governor said.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor administered the Anti-Drug pledge and also launched Rajouri Premier League and Rajouri Football Club under the Nasha Mukta Jammu

Kashmir Abhiyaan.

Artists through Musical opera spread awareness on the devastating impacts of substance abuse. (KNO)

Kashmir's first

for this moment," an elderly pilgrim told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), before entering the Haj House.

Another family member said the tears were mixed with happiness, calling the pilgrimage a blessing for the entire family.

Officials said three flights carrying a total of 431 pilgrims departed from Srinagar on the first day, including 230 men and 201 women.

Executive Officer of the Haj Committee, Dr Shujaat Ahmad Qureshi told KNO that all arrangements, including transport, baggage handling, medical screening and documentation, had been put in place to ensure smooth departures.

"We have made all necessary arrangements for the comfort and convenience of pilgrims. The process remained smooth since morning," he said.

Later, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah formally saw off the first batch of pilgrims at Srinagar International Airport. He interacted with the devotees, extended greetings and wished them a safe, peaceful and spiritually fulfilling journey.

CM Abdullah prayed for successful completion of Haj and sought blessings for peace, harmony and prosperity in Jammu & Kashmir.

Officials said 28 flights will operate between April 18 and May 5 to facilitate the pilgrimage this year. A total of 4,704 pilgrims from Jammu

& Kashmir are scheduled to perform Haj in 2026. (KNO)

Arrangement for RS

were held on October 24, 2025 to fill seats that had remained vacant since 2021—the year when the last members from the Union Territory completed their tenures. The vacancies could not be filled earlier due to the non-availability of an electorate (MLAs).

In the Rajya Sabha polls, the National Conference won three seats and the Bharatiya Janata Party one seat, despite being short of numbers.

As many as eight MLAs, who had pledged support to the ruling NC-led alliance, cross-voted or cancelled their votes to help the BJP win a seat.

It is rumoured in political circles that the BJP also managed to secure support from legislator(s) belonging to a party considered its arch-rival. (KNO)

LG inaugurates

forces, police and civil administration were also present.

Opposition 'crushed'

parties have insulted our Constitution by defeating the bill," he said.

The prime minister said the bill was aimed at giving wings to women's empowerment without taking anything away from anyone.

"I expected the Congress to correct its past mistakes, but it missed an opportunity to script new history. The family-run parties do not want women to move forward as that could

end their selfish politics," he said.

He also accused the Congress of pursuing divisive politics, alleging it spread falsehoods about a North-South divide

"A woman forgets everything, but not her insult; this insult by the Congress and its allies will always remain in every woman's heart," he said.

Modi said the amendment to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam was the need of the hour and an honest effort to ensure balanced empowerment across north, south, east and west. "Congress has always opposed all attempts for nation-building, betterment of our country," he said.

CM Omar inspects

52 infants) for advanced care. Officials informed that the centre will feature state-of-the-art infrastructure including modular operation theatres, ICU, HDU, NICU, Labour, Delivery and Recovery (LDR) suites, IVF laboratories and advanced fetal intervention facilities, in line with modern hospital standards followed at national and international levels.

Highlighting the project's structural resilience, it was given put that the building is being developed using advanced base isolation technology with 43 friction pendulum isolators, ensuring high seismic safety in Zone-V. The design and engineering components have been vetted by premier technical institutions to ensure quality and safety.

Reviewing the progress, the Chief Minister was informed that the foundation works and ground floor structural framework are fully

in place. Installation of base isolators is at an advanced stage, while pre-engineered building (PEB) structural works are underway across multiple zones. Procurement of major medical equipment, as well as mechanical and electrical systems, has also been initiated.

The Chief Minister stressed the need for close coordination among all stakeholder departments, particularly the Health Department, to ensure uninterrupted fund flow, timely approvals and clearances, and smooth operationalisation of the facility upon completion.

Emphasising the importance of the project, he said that the new facility will mark a major milestone in upgrading healthcare infrastructure and providing specialised, accessible and high-quality care to women and newborns across Jammu and Kashmir.

Fatty liver often

until significant damage has occurred, making awareness, early detection, and lifestyle intervention crucial.

To counter the growing crisis, doctors are urging people to adopt healthier lifestyles by returning to balanced diets rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, while limiting processed foods, sugar, and unhealthy fats. Regular physical activity, weight management, and control of blood sugar and cholesterol levels are also essential.

"People need to prioritise their liver health. Small changes in diet and daily routine can make a big difference," doctors said, warning that ignoring the issue could lead to a far more serious health crisis in the years ahead. (KNO)

Noble effort 'derailed,' DMK, Cong made it target of hatred: PM on women's reservation bill



PTI
Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu), Apr 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said his government's women's reservation bill was a noble effort that got 'derailed' due to the DMK and Congress which made it a "target of hatred and petty politics."
Especially targeting the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Congress over the amendment bill being defeated in the Lok Sabha on Friday, the PM asked, "Why does it trouble DMK, Congress to see ordinary women rise?"
He said he had personally appealed to the opposition parties to support the bill and even offered to give them credit as "I only wanted sisters from ordinary families to come to parliament, assemblies in good numbers."
"But unfortunately, this noble effort got derailed. DMK, Congress

and their allies made it a target of hatred and petty politics," he charged.
Had this bill been passed, many Tamil women from ordinary families would have become MPs and MLAs. Based on 2011 census, Tamil Nadu was going to get so many more seats in Lok Sabha, "but clearly DMK didn't want this to happen," he said, addressing a poll rally here.
"Why does it trouble DMK, Congress to see ordinary women rise? These one family parties want power to be confined in their own family," he alleged, in an apparent reference to the Congress and DMK.
He appealed to women of Tamil Nadu to ask DMK why they opposed the bill meant to ensure their representation, why they "denied Tamil women this golden opportunity."
"On April 23 give them a clear, powerful message," he said about polling day.

'14 India-bound ships trying to cross Strait of Hormuz stopped by Iran; 1 hit by bullets, 1 crosses'



PTI
New Delhi, Apr 18 (PTI) A convoy of 14 India-bound ships carrying crude oil and gas were stopped by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) by firing at two of them while they were transiting the Strait of Hormuz, leading to 13 of the vessels returning to different locations in the Persian Gulf, official sources privy to the development said.
An Indian-flag carrying ship, which was hit by bullets fired by the IRGC while crossing the Strait of Hormuz, was

carrying crude oil and a window pane was broken, forcing it to stop the journey and return. The extent of damage to the second vessel was not immediately known but it also had returned.
However, another ship, which was Indian flagged and loaded with crude oil for the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, sailed through the Strait and is now heading towards India, the sources said.
Two Iranian gunboats approached the targeted tanker and fired at it without warning. Gunboats approached the vessel 37

kilometres northeast of Oman, causing other vessels to return without completing the crossing, the sources said.
The incident was reported in waters between the Qeshm and Larak islands, they said.
Out of the 14 India-bound vessels, seven are carrying crude oil, three have the Liberia flag, two are of the Marshall Islands and one of Vietnam.
Six of them are loaded with crude oil, three have LPG and four are loaded with fertilisers. Among the ships, five are bulk carriers. All 14 vessels were sailing in a row.

India summons Iran envoy

PTI
New Delhi, Apr 18: India on Saturday summoned Iranian envoy Mohammad Fathali after two Indian vessels had to reverse course in the Strait of Hormuz following an incident of firing by Iran's Revolutionary Guards, authoritative sources said.
A strong protest was lodged with the ambassador over the incident, they said.
There is no official word yet on summoning Fathali to the external affairs ministry. Several commercial vessels tried to cross the Strait of Hormuz after Iran on Friday announced that it has opened the waterway for commercial traffic.
Tehran on Saturday said it has again closed the Strait of Hormuz, alleging that the US violated certain understanding reached between the two sides.
A vessel tracker reported that two Indian vessels had to reverse course in the Strait of Hormuz following reports of gunfire from Iran's Revolutionary Guard.
The vessels include an Indian-flagged super tanker, carrying 2 million barrels of Iraqi oil, it said.
Earlier this week, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar underlined India's strong commitment to "safe and unimpeded" transit passage of maritime shipping, even as he emphasised that attacks on merchant shipping are "completely unacceptable".
The EAM said this in his remarks while participating in 'AZECC Plus' online meeting convened by Japan to discuss supply chain disruptions in the energy markets.

US renews sanctions waiver for purchase of Russian oil

Washington, Apr 18: The United States has extended by a month a waiver from sanctions to allow countries to buy petroleum products from Russia, days after it ruled out renewal of the special measure.
The US Department of Treasury issued an order late Friday extending the waiver from sanctions on Russian oil that is already at sea on or before April 17 through May 16.
Earlier, the US had granted an exemption from sanctions to India for buying Russian oil for a month beginning March 5. A few days later, a similar waiver was extended to several other countries, which ended on April 11.
The general licence issued by the US on Friday does not authorise any transaction involving a person, entity or joint venture located in Iran, North Korea, Cuba, or parts of Ukraine.
On Wednesday, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Washington would not be renewing the waiver for Russian oil and another for Iranian oil.
The previous waiver of sanctions had made available 140 million barrels of Russian oil already loaded on ships to global markets as prices soared against the backdrop of the US war with Iran.
"Effective April 17, 2026, General License No. 134A, which was dated March 19, 2026 and expired on April 11, 2026, is replaced and superseded in its entirety by this General License No. 134B," said the order issued by the Department of Treasury.

Bihar: Z security for both Dy CMs along with Nitish son



PTI
Patna, Apr 18: The Samrat Choudhary government in Bihar on Saturday granted Z security cover to Deputy Chief Ministers Vijay Kumar Choudhary and Bijendra Prasad Yadav, besides Nishant Kumar, a greenhorn whose father Nitish resigned as the CM earlier this week.
The announcement was made by the state home department through a couple of notifications, barely three days after the change of guard, which saw the two veteran JD(U) leaders being sworn into the cabinet and designated as deputy CMs.
According to the notification, which announced Z security for Nishant, who joined the JD(U) a month ago, but is yet to be

elect to the legislature, the Z-plus cover enjoyed by senior BJP leader Vijay Sinha, who held the deputy CM's post along with Samrat Choudhary in the Nitish Kumar government, has been downgraded. Sinha, a fifth term MLA, who is also the first BJP leader to have become the assembly Speaker, in 2020, a post he held till Nitish Kumar's exit from NDA two years later, will now have a Z security cover.
The Home department also announced Y plus security cover for senior JD(U) leader Shruvan Kumar, who was a minister in the Nitish Kumar government.
Seven-five-year-old Nitish Kumar, who is now a Rajya Sabha MP, was heading a 26-member cabinet, with ministers drawn from his own party, BJP and three smaller alliance partners.

BJP women workers march to Rahul Gandhi's residence

PTI
Says 'Oppn don't want women to have rights'
New Delhi, Apr 18: BJP women leaders and workers on Saturday staged a protest march near Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi's residence in Sunehri Bagh, following the defeat of the amendment to the women's quota law.
The protesters, including BJP women MPs Hema Malini, Kamaljeet Sehrawat, Bansuri Swaraj, Manju Sharma, and Vatsalya Gupta, slammed the Opposition parties for the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha on Friday, accusing them of "humiliating" the women of the country.
Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, State president Virendra Sachdeva, Union minister Raksha Khadse, MP Manoj Tiwari and party women cadre also joined the protest.
Officials said that police used water cannons to disperse women protesters who were marching toward Gandhi's residence.
"Prime Minister Narendra Modi worked hard for the passing of the Bill, but the Opposition parties did not allow it," Hema Malini said, addressing the protesters gathered at Moti Lal Nehru Marg.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have changed my name from Hilal UI Hamid (old name) to Hilal UI Hamid Wani (new name) and shall be known by this name in future. I am updating the same in my passport records. If anyone has any objection, they may contact the Passport Office Srinagar within 7 days of publication of this notice, after which no objection shall be entertained.

Hilal UI Hamid Wani
S/o: Abdul Hamid Wani
R/o: 125, Alamdar Colony C Baghat-i-Shoor, Mallabagh, Lal Bazar, Srinagar
PP No.: N2236630

Govt approves Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool with sovereign guarantee of Rs 12,980 cr

PTI
New Delhi, Apr 18: The Union Cabinet on Saturday approved the proposal for the creation of a domestic insurance pool, namely 'Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool' (BMI pool) with a sovereign guarantee of Rs 12,980 crore to facilitate continuous maritime insurance coverages, according to an official statement.



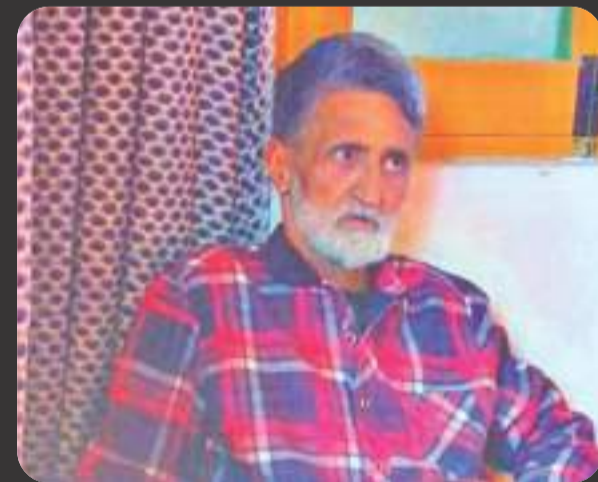
The statement said the Domestic Insurance Pool addresses global volatility, geopolitical instability and reduces the external insurance dependency of Indian vessels.
"The pool covers all maritime risks like Hull and Machinery, Cargo, P&I and War risk. It covers vessels carrying cargo from any international origin to Indian ports and vice-versa, even when transiting volatile maritime corridors," it added.
The statement said the pool will ensure that

Indian trade continues to have access to affordable insurance for vessels carrying cargo from any international origin to Indian ports and vice-versa, even when transiting volatile maritime corridors.
Addressing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool will cover India-flagged vessels, India-controlled vessels ... it will cover 10 years period."
"Our dependency on

foreign insurance companies will reduce, and we will also save foreign exchange outgo," he added.
With increased global volatility and geopolitical instability, maritime trade has been impacted with increased risk of losses for cargo and vessels resulting in increased insurance costs and uncertainty in continuous availability of insurance.
Further, there is high dependence of Indian vessels on International Group of Protection and Indemnity (IGP&I) Club

for P&I insurance covering third-party liabilities like Oil pollution liability, Wreck removal, Cargo damage, Crew injury and repatriation, Collision liabilities and so on.
Accordingly, the statement said there was a need for a domestic maritime risk covering pool to maintain sovereignty and continuity of trade in face of withdrawal of coverage due to sanctions or due to geopolitical tensions.
"In the above backdrop, the government has approved formation of 'Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool' (BMI pool) for Indian flagged or controlled vessels or vessels destined to or starting from India, backed by a sovereign guarantee," it said.
The policies will be issued by insurers that are Pool members, using the combined underwriting capacity of the Pool, which would be around Rs 950 crore.

SAD DEMISE



With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the sad demise of our beloved Uncle Bashir Ahmad Khan Son Of Ghulam Nabi Khan R/O Nundresh Colony Bemina who left for her heavenly abode on 17 th April 2026
Condolence will be observed for (18 th April to 20 th April).
All near and dear ones are requested not to bring any eatables.
The Congregation Fateha Khawani Will Be On Monday 10.00 AM At Fateh Kadal Grave Yard Near Khazghari Masjid
Kindly keep our Uncle in your prayers.

BEREAVED FAMILY:
TASIR AHMAD KHAN
MUHAMMAD AYOUB KHAN
CONTACT: 7889943024

Iran says it has closed Strait of Hormuz again over US blockade

AP

Cairo, Apr 18: The standoff over the Strait of Hormuz quickly escalated again Saturday as Iran reversed its reopening of the crucial waterway and fired on ships attempting to pass, in retaliation after the United States pressed ahead with its blockade chocking off Iranian ports.

Confusion over the strait, through which roughly one-fifth of the world's oil passes, threatened to deepen the energy crisis roiling the global economy and push the two countries toward renewed conflict. The ceasefire between them is due to run out by mid-next week, and Pakistani mediators were working to put together a new round of direct negotiations to keep the truce going.

Iran's joint military command said Saturday that "control of the Strait of Hormuz has returned to its previous state ... under strict management and control of the armed forces." It warned that it would continue to block transit through the strait as long as the US blockade of Iranian ports remained in effect.

Revolutionary Guard gunboats on Saturday opened fire on a tanker transiting the strait and



an unknown projectile hit a container vessel, damaging some of the containers, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said without identifying the vessels. TankerTrackers.com reported that two Indian-flagged vessels were forced to turn around after being fired on by Iran, including a supertanker carrying Iraqi oil.

The renewed escalation resulted from attempts by both sides to maintain leverage amid negotiations over an ultimate deal to end the war and address Iran's nuclear program.

For the United States, the blockade is a key tool to keep up pressure on Iran, short of

resuming bombardment. By cutting off much of Iran's exports and imports, it could strangle an already crippled economy.

For Iran, closure of the strait — imposed after the US and Israel launched their surprise war on the country on Feb 28 — has proven to be perhaps its most powerful weapon in the confrontation, causing oil prices to spike, threatening the world economy and inflicting political pain on Trump.

Progress threatens to unravel. On Friday, Iran announced the reopening of the strait to commercial vessels after a 10-day truce was sealed between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah

militant group in Lebanon. The reopening triggered a fall in oil prices. Iran's closure of the strait since has triggered an energy crisis that has roiled the global economy.

US President Donald Trump, however, said that even with the reopening, the American blockade "will remain in full force" until Tehran reaches a deal with the US. Trump imposed the blockade, halting all shipping to and from Iranian ports as the ceasefire between Iran and the US was announced last week to keep pressure on Iran to make a deal in Pakistan-brokered talks to end almost seven weeks of war.

His comments triggered immediate outcry from Iranian officials, calling the blockade a violation that would prompt a re-closure of the strait.

"Americans are risking the international community, risking the global economy through these, I can say, miscalculations," referring to the blockade, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh told the Associated Press on Saturday.

"Everybody must understand to what extent American side is risking the whole ceasefire package," he said, speaking after a diplomatic forum in Antalya, Turkey.

Pope Leo XIV says 'not in my interest at all' to debate Trump but will keep preaching peace

AP

Aboard the papal plane, Apr 18: Pope Leo XIV said Saturday that it was "not in my interest at all" to debate US President Donald Trump about the Iran war, but that he would continue preaching the Gospel message of peace.

Leo spoke to reporters aboard the papal plane flying from Cameroon to Angola.

He addressed the spiraling back-and-forth saga of Trump's critiques of his peace message, which have dominated news headlines this week. But the American pope also sought to set the record straight, insisting that his preaching isn't directed at Trump, but reflects the broader Gospel message of peace.

"There's been a certain narrative that has not been accurate in all of its aspects, but because of the political situation created when, on the first day of the trip, the president of the United States made some comments about myself," he said.

"Much of what has been written since then has been more commentary on commentary, trying to interpret what has been said." Trump launched the



criticism on his social media platform Truth Social on the night of April 12, when he criticized Leo's preaching about peace as the war, which began with joint US-Israeli strikes on Feb 28 and followed by Iran's retaliation, rages on.

Trump accused Leo of being soft on crime, cozy with the left and said that the first American pontiff owed his election to Trump.

Leo has issued consistent calls for peace and dialogue, and has denounced the use of religious justification for war. Specifically, he called Trump's threat to annihilate Iranian civilization "truly unacceptable."

The Vatican has stressed that when Leo preaches about

peace, he is referring to all wars ravaging the planet, not just the Iran conflict. The Russian Orthodox Church, for example, has justified Moscow's invasion of Ukraine as a "holy war".

Speaking to reporters on Saturday, Leo referred specifically to his remarks earlier this week to a peace meeting in Bamenda, Cameroon. The city is the epicentre of a separatist conflict that has been raging in the western, Anglophone region of the country for nearly a decade.

Leo said that his remarks, in which he blasted the "handful of tyrants" who were ravaging Earth with war and exploitation, were written two weeks ago, long before Trump's criticisms began.

Delhi Capitals beat RCB by 6 wickets after Miller's last over sixes

PTI

Bengaluru, Apr 18: David Miller struck two sixes in a tense last over as Delhi Capitals beat Royal Challengers Bengaluru by six wickets in their Indian Premier League match here on Saturday.

Delhi Capitals bowled with a lot of discipline to restrict RCB to 175 for 8. In reply, the visitors completed the chase of 176 with a ball to spare. KL Rahul (57), Tristan Stubbs (60 not out) made significant contributions for DC with the bat, but it was Miller's (22 not out in 10 balls) two maximums that sealed the match in his team's favour.

RCB seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar bowled beautifully to end with figures of 3/26 in four overs.

Asked to bat first, RCB were well served by English opener Phil Salt, who top-scored for the home team with a 38-ball 63.

However, RCB's other top-order batters failed to fire as Delhi Capitals made a strong comeback with the ball, with skipper



Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav and Lungi Ngidi picking two wickets each with their impressive bowling.

Brief Scores:
Royal Challengers Bengaluru:

175/8 in 20 overs (Phil Salt 63; Axar Patel 2/18, Kuldeep Yadav 2/32, Lungi Ngidi 2/39).

Delhi Capitals: 179/4 in 19.5 overs (KL Rahul 57, Tristan Stubbs 60 not out; Bhuvneshwar Kumar 3/26).

Sangakkara urges calm around Vaibhav

'Let him enjoy everything, sometimes less said, the better'

PTI

Kolkata, Apr 18: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's IPL journey is already shaping up as a mix of dazzling highs and some tough lessons, but Rajasthan Royals head coach Kumar Sangakkara feels he must "enjoy" his cricket and that "less said, the better" for him.

Having lit up the IPL with his explosive batting against the likes of Jasprit Bumrah (Mumbai Indians) and Josh Hazlewood (RCB), the young sensation was dismissed for a golden duck by an unheralded Praful Hinge in their last match against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"My message to Vaibhav is simple: enjoy everything. Whether it's 100 off 35 balls, 50 off 15, or a first-ball duck -- you're allowed to score runs, and you're allowed to fail. It's part and parcel of cricket," the RR director of cricket said on the high expectations surrounding the young gun.

"Vaibhav is such an exciting young player. People talk about talent, but they should also understand the amount of work he puts in at the nets. He reads the game really well,



anticipates situations, and plans against bowlers effectively."

Sooryavanshi, who turned 15 last month, returned for his second IPL season with high expectations after scoring an explosive 80-ball 175 in India's Under-19 World Cup triumph in February.

He lit up the IPL with a 17-ball 52 against five-time champions Chennai Super Kings in their opening match, and since then has not looked back, with an eye-popping strike rate of over 263 after five innings.

He started with a first-ball six against Bumrah in their clash with Mumbai Indians, and then took Hazlewood apart against RCB, hitting three fours and a six in succession.

BAI launches first-ever nationwide mascot contest for World Championships

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 18: The Badminton Association of India (BAI) has announced a nationwide mascot design contest for the upcoming BWF World Championships 2026, inviting fans, artists, and creators to play a role in shaping the identity of one of badminton's most prestigious global events.

Conceived to deepen fan engagement and celebrate India's rich cultural diversity alongside its growing badminton legacy, the initiative marks a first-of-its-kind effort by BAI to bring the community closer to the sport.

With the BWF World Championships returning to India after 17 years, the initiative underscores both the scale of the event and the country's rise as a badminton powerhouse, highlighted by 15 world championships medals in the past decade, including PV Sindhu's historic gold in 2019 and Satwik-Chirag's bronze last year.

As New Delhi prepares to host the global showpiece, the mascot search offers a unique opportunity to craft a visual identity that reflects India's sporting ascent, cultural richness, and deep-rooted connect with badminton.

RKFC eye strong finish in last home game against Sreenidi Deccan FC



KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, April 18: Real Kashmir Football Club (RKFC) will aim to continue their winning momentum when they take on Sreenidi Deccan FC in an Indian Football League (IFL) clash at TRC Ground Srinagar on Sunday (April 19). Coming off a dominant 6-2 victory over Gokulam Kerala FC, the home side enters the contest with renewed confidence. The match is significant as it is likely to be RKFC's final home fixture of the season in the IFL, formerly known as the I-League, before they head out for remaining away games.

The encounter, scheduled under floodlights, will kick off at 6:30 pm and is expected to draw strong local support.

Addressing a pre-match press conference, RKFC head coach Ishfaq Ahmad said the team has regained confidence after bouncing back strongly in their previous match. "We had no option but to respond, and the players delivered well," he said.

However, Ishfaq acknowledged the challenge posed by Sreenidi Deccan FC, highlighting their quality squad and attacking strength. "They have a good coach and players and strong strikers. We also have a balanced side. If we execute our plans well, we are hopeful of a positive result," he added.

RKFC player Furqan Ahmad echoed similar sentiments, saying the morale in the team is high. "We are confident and want to end our last home match on a good note," he said.

Movies SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, 19 APRIL

INOX
THEATRES
SHINAGAN



LEE CRONINS THE MUMMY (A)
ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES
12:00 PM, 07:20 PM



BHOOTH BANGLA (U/A16+)
HINDI ATMOS - 12:00 PM, 03:15 PM, 06:30 PM
HINDI - 10:30 AM, 01:45 PM



DHURANDHAR THE REVENGE (A)
HINDI - 02:55 PM, 05:00 PM

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