



Nasha-Mukt Campaign

Drug abuse eroding foundations of society from within: LG Sinha

■ J&K carried heavy silence surrounding menace of drug abuse

■ Historic people's movement launched to shatter silence

KNO Desk

Jammu, Apr 24: Urging communities, institutions, and individuals alike to unite in the fight against drug abuse, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Friday said that crisis is eroding the very foundations of society from within.

Addressing the launch ceremony of 'Drug-Free J&K Campaign' in Reasi, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) appealed for a broad-based people's movement to eradicate the menace.

He said that for the past 12 days, a collective force has risen across the Union Territory against drugs and people are resolutely committed to the objective to make this land free from narcotics.



Highlighting the achievement of the campaign in the past 12 days, the Lieutenant Governor said that in Jammu division, between 11 April and 22 April, large number of cases were registered and several drug smugglers were arrested. He said

narcotics valued at nearly Rs. 3 crore have been seized and about Rs. One crore worth of movable and immovable properties were attached.

"Properties of drug smugglers have been demolished. 187 driving licenses and four

vehicle registrations have also been cancelled. Financial investigations have been initiated against 48 drug peddlers. Drug and chemist shops have been inspected, and 15 drug store licenses have been cancelled. Drug users have been referred to de addiction and rehabilitation centres and Counselling has also been extended to drug users," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also observed that 1,947 women committees have been established across districts in the Jammu division since the beginning of the campaign on 11th April and with the support of mothers and sisters, this cancer in society will be cured.

"We must build a historic movement, one that rises from homes, schools, | More on P6

Ensure effective implementation of DYD, skill dev, AI progs: LG

Chairs high-level J&K Higher Education Council meet

KNO Desk

Jammu, Apr 24: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday directed for effective on-ground implementation of 'Design Your Degree (DYD), skill development, and AI-driven programmes.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the directions were issued by the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha in a high-level meeting of Jammu Kashmir Higher Education Council, at Lok Bhavan.

On the occasion, the council, under the leadership of the LG Sinha, deliberated on comprehensive strategies aimed at driving the holistic transformation of the education sector across the Union Territory.

The key agendas included implementation of the 'Design Your Degree' (DYD) program and the adoption of its official manual across universities, integration of IT and Artificial Intelligence into the



curriculum, strategies to promote entrepreneurship, knowledge-based skills and develop human capital for Viksit Bharat.

The Lieutenant Governor directed for the effective, on-ground implementation of 'Design Your Degree', skill development, Artificial Intelligence and other innovative programmes and initiatives across higher educational institutions.

He also called for seamless synergy between Central and Union Territory educational institutions to drive a holistic transformation of the education sector.

"We must establish

benchmarks aligned with both national and international standards, ensuring that Jammu Kashmir's education sector stands as a model of excellence in the country," LG Sinha said.

The meeting was attended by Prof. Dinesh Singh, Vice Chairman, J&K Higher Education Council; Shailendra Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department; Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Kumar Rajeev Ranjan, Administrative Secretary, Skill Development; Ram Niwas Sharma, Commissioner Secretary; Higher | More on P6

MLAs discuss constituency issues with CM Omar



KT News Desk

Jammu, Apr 24: Several legislators and deputations on Friday called on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah here and apprised him of a range of issues concerning their respective constituencies, seeking timely intervention and resolution.

MLA Ramnagar Sunil Bharadwaj, MLA Habbakadal Shamim Firdous, MLA Budhal

Javid Iqbal, MLA Kokernag Zaffar Ali Khatana, MLA Thanamandi Muzaffar Iqbal Khan and former minister Yashpaul Kundal were among those who met the Chief Minister.

During the interactions, the representatives raised various development-related concerns, including augmentation of basic infrastructure, improvement in road | More on P6

All-weather direct Jammu-Srinagar Vande Bharat from April 30

■ Specially designed for Kashmir's extreme cold

■ 20-coach train to cover 266 km; Bijbehara halt for cross run

Umair Gull Ganie

Srinagar, Apr 24: The direct Jammu-Srinagar train service is set to commence with an inaugural run on April 30, with Indian Railways introducing a specially designed Vande Bharat train equipped to operate in extreme weather conditions.

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that all necessary arrangements have been put in place for the inaugural journey, while the regular schedule and additional halts will be notified separately.

They said the train will run with a 20-coach Vande Bharat



rake and cover a distance of around 266.66 kilometres during the inaugural run. The train will also halt at Bijbehara, which will remain operational for the cross-run of the service. In view of the challenging

terrain and sub-zero temperatures in Jammu & Kashmir, the train has been fitted with advanced "winterisation" features to ensure uninterrupted operations. For the | More on P6

Govt begins exercise of framing rules for Private Universities Act

Rules to be framed at earliest to encourage pvt universities: Edu Min

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Apr 24: The Jammu and Kashmir Government has begun drafting rules for the implementation of The Jammu and Kashmir Private Universities Act, 2026.

Sources told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the Government has initiated the exercise of framing rules under the law.

Speaking to KNO, Minister for Education Sakina Masood Ittoo said she has directed that the Rules be framed at the earliest.

"Our government is keen that more and more private universities should be established in Jammu & Kashmir, given that we have a limited number of public universities here," she said.

The Jammu and Kashmir Private Universities Bill, 2026 was passed by the J&K Assembly during the recently concluded budget session. Both the treasury benches and the opposition hailed the legislation as a landmark move in the higher education sector of J&K.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has also | More on P6

Cloudy weather, light rain likely across Kashmir

Heatwave in Jammu region; advisories issued for farmers, public

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Apr 24: The India Meteorological Department on Friday forecast partly to generally cloudy weather with spells of light rain and thundershowers across Kashmir over the next few days, while warning of heatwave conditions in parts of the Jammu region.

According to the Meteorological Centre Srinagar, scattered to many places are likely to receive light rain or thundershowers with gusty winds during the afternoon and evening hours on April 25. The weather is expected to remain largely dry on April 26 and 27, with brief spells of light rain at isolated places.

The MeT office, as reported

by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said generally cloudy conditions with light rain and gusty winds are likely at scattered locations on April 28, followed by brief spells of rain at a few places between April 29 and May 2, mainly during late afternoon hours.

Temperature data released by the department showed that most parts of Kashmir recorded above-normal day temperatures. Srinagar recorded a maximum of 28.1°C, 6.1 degrees above normal, and a minimum of 13.0°C. Qazigund registered a high of 27.2°C, while Pahalgam settled at 25.0°C and Kupwara at 25.4°C.

Gulmarg recorded a maximum temperature of 18.6°C, while Kokernag saw 26.6°C. Night temperatures also

remained above normal, with Gulmarg recording a minimum of 8.0°C and Pahalgam 6.8°C.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded a maximum of 39.3°C, nearly five degrees above normal, while the minimum settled at 22.8°C. Katra recorded 36.0°C, Banihal 29.0°C, and Batote 29.2°C.

The MeT department said hot and dry weather is likely to persist in Jammu, Kathua, Samba, Reasi and Udhampur districts over the next four days, with heatwave conditions expected at isolated places on April 24.

The department has advised farmers to suspend farm operations on April 24 and 25 due to the possibility of gusty winds and thundershowers. It also urged | More on P6

Rare Himalayan Musk Deer rescued along LoC in Gurez

'Roose Kat' was spotted in Bandipora's Wanpora village

Sajid Raina

Bandipora, Apr 24: A rare male musk deer was rescued by the Wildlife Department from a village near the Line of Control (LoC) in the Gurez Valley of north Kashmir's Bandipora district, officials said on Friday.

The animal, locally known as "Roose Kat", was spotted in Wanpora village, prompting locals to alert the department, they said.

A wildlife team rushed to the area and launched a rescue operation, successfully capturing the deer alive without causing any harm, officials said. Wildlife official Tanveer



Ahmad told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the species is rarely

sighted along the LoC belt in Gurez, making the rescue significant.

The animal was shifted to the Ajas range for initial care and later referred to the Dachigam Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre for treatment and observation, he said.

The Kashmir musk deer (*Moschus cupreus*) is an endangered and elusive mammal found in the high-altitude Himalayas. Despite its name, it is not a true deer but belongs to a separate family, Moschidae.

Males are known for their elongated, tusk-like canines and a musk gland, which has made the species a target for poaching.

Officials said severe winters often push | More on P6

Youth must be partners in building Viksit Bharat 2047: Mandaviya

Three-day Chintan Shivir of Youth Affairs & Sports Ministers begins in Srinagar

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Apr 24: A three-day Chintan Shivir of Youth Affairs and Sports Ministers from states and Union Territories began here at SKICC on Friday, with Union Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya calling for making youth equal partners in nation-building and stressing that stakeholder consultation and transparency must ensure grassroots inputs directly translate into policy outcomes without leakages.

The first day, themed "Samvaad Se Samadhaan" (From Dialogue to Solution), focused on strengthening youth engagement frameworks through MY Bharat, with emphasis on policy



alignment, institutional convergence, and outcome-oriented programme delivery. In his keynote address,

Union Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya highlighted the importance of inclusive and participatory | More on P6

Workers' welfare key to nation's growth: Union Minister

Inaugurates ESIC Hospital in Budgam

Naveed Ul Haq Ganaiee

Budgam, Apr 24: Asserting that workers' welfare is key to nation's growth, Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Friday said that the country's development depends largely on the contribution of its workforce.

Addressing the inaugural function of a 30-bedded ESIC hospital at Ompora,

the Minister, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "The government is committed to strengthening the welfare of labourers."

Mandaviya said that the hospital, set up under the Employees State Insurance Corporation scheme, will provide affordable and quality treatment to insured workers. He said the | More on P6

Terror funding case

NIA attaches accused's property in Budgam

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Apr 24: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday attached a parcel of land belonging to an accused currently in its custody in connection with a terror-related case registered in Jammu.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), that the action was carried out by an NIA team headed by Deputy Superintendent of Police Panchkaj Agarwal.

He said the attached property belongs to Tafazul Hussain Parimoo, son of Abdul Rashid Parimoo, resident

of Sheikh-ul-Alam Colony, Nowgam, Srinagar.

"The property comprises 11.5 marlas of land under Survey No. 25, situated at SK Bagh, Budgam," he said.

The official said the accused is presently under NIA custody in connection with a case registered under relevant sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Arms Act and Explosive Substances Act.

He said the attachment proceedings were conducted in the presence of Naib Tehsildar B.K. Pora and other officials. Further investigation in the case is underway. (KNO)

Govt committed towards strengthening Anganwadi ecosystem: Sakeena Itoo

Addresses Poshan Pakhwada celebrations in Jammu, says Anganwadi workers, helpers backbone of grassroots child welfare, community development

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, APRIL 24: Minister for Social Welfare, Education, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo Friday said that Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and Helpers are the backbone of grassroots child welfare and community development, adding that their role extends far beyond service delivery.

The Minister, as per an official statement, was speaking at the concluding ceremony of 8th Poshan Pakhwada celebrations held at Government Polytechnic College, Jammu.

Mission Director ICDS, Sajad Hussain Ganie; Secretary in Social Welfare department, Bashir Ahmad Khan; Director Social Welfare Jammu, Ranjeet Singh; Director Health Services Jammu, Dr. Abdul Hamid Zargar; Programme officers, CDPOs, Supervisors and large number of Anganwadi workers and Helpers were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, the Minister appreciated the dedication and tireless efforts of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, describing them as the backbone of grassroots child welfare and nutrition services. She said that their role extends far beyond service delivery, as they serve as the



first point of contact for mothers, children and families in rural as well as urban areas.

"Anganwadi Workers are the real change-makers at the grassroots. Their commitment towards early childhood care, nutrition, pre-school education and child welfare is laying the foundation for a healthier and empowered future generation," the Minister stated.

She highlighted that ICDS sector is very big sector and more than 28,000 of our sisters work in this sector. "As far as the ICDS or social welfare sector is concerned, some other departments are connected to this sector like education, health and others. Our Anganwadi workers and Helpers perform duties in these departments during awareness programmes or other events,

apart from their parent department", she said.

The Minister stressed the need for collective efforts from all stakeholders, including families, communities, and government departments, to ensure that every child receives proper nutrition and every mother has access to essential healthcare and support. She underscored the importance of Poshan Pakhwada as a people-centric initiative focusing on combating malnutrition, improving health outcomes for women and children, and creating awareness about balanced nutrition and early childhood care.

Giving background of ICDS sector, Sakeena Itoo said that in the year 1996, the then Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah brought this project into Jammu and Kashmir

and implemented it.

Sakeena Itoo stressed the importance of integrating hygiene awareness with child development initiatives and urged field functionaries to continue educating families about sanitation, nutrition and preventive healthcare. She noted that a clean environment plays a significant role in reducing disease burden and improving the quality of life for children and women.

Highlighting various achievements of the Government, the Minister said that the Government led by Omar Abdullah increased the Marriage Assistance from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 75,000, besides the qualification bar for availing the scheme has been removed.

Div Com Kashmir reviews revenue matters, development initiatives

'Ensure all structures of cultural, historical importance are properly documented'



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, APRIL 24: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, Friday chaired a meeting to review a range of revenue-related matters, including migrant properties, construction of houses for terror victims, digitization of land records, Digital Crop Survey, and development of urban revenue-generating assets.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Deputy Commissioners, the Additional Commissioner Central, and the Officer on Special

Duty to the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir.

While reviewing progress on the construction of houses for terror victims, the Divisional Commissioner directed Deputy Commissioners to ensure that all eligible beneficiaries possess the requisite land, with a minimum of five marlas, to facilitate timely assistance.

Regarding the updation of Girdawari records of religious and heritage sites, he instructed the Deputy Commissioners to ensure that all structures of cultural and historical importance are properly documented

and their records duly updated and certified.

The Divisional Commissioner also assessed the status of migrant properties, including the quantum of land, district-wise progress in removal of encroachments, and the disposal of grievances submitted by migrants.

Reviewing progress under the SVAMITA Scheme and Digital Crop Survey, he urged Deputy Commissioners to intensify efforts to achieve timely implementation and broader coverage.

Further, the Divisional Commissioner directed Deputy Commissioners to prepare Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) under the Urban Challenge Fund in consultation with Municipal Executive Officers to focus on the development of public utility and revenue-generating infrastructure in urban areas, including parking facilities, bus stands, and other convenience assets.

Also, he called for ensuring active participation of public representatives and citizens in the ongoing Pad Yatra organized under the Nasha Mukht Campaign, aimed at promoting a drug-free society.

NOTICE

I have applied for transfer of Electricity Connection From Ab Qayoom Khan Consumer ID No:0203010012806 To Nasir Azam Khan S/o Ab Qayoom Khan R/o Patli Pora Bala Chattabal. In this regard if anybody having any objection may please contact concerned department within seven days from the publication of this notice afterwards no objection will be entertained

Nasir Azam Khan
S/o Ab Qayoom Khan
R/o Patli Pora Bala Chattabal.

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Naseer Ahmad Parry S/o: Mohd Amin Parry R/o: Green Town.

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 Hooriya Naseer D/o: Naseer Ahmad Parry as 23-05-2016 at Home.

Whereas through the medium of this proclamation the public at large is informed that in case any one has any objection for issuance of direction with respect to the registration of aforementioned Birth event he /she shall file the same before this court in person or through counsel within 7 days from the date of the publication of this proclamation. If the date fixed is declared holiday, the matter will be taken on the next working day.

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

HEALTH & MEDICAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, GOVT. OF J&K

GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE, ANANTNAG

COLLEGE CAMPUS, DIALGAM ANANTNAG J&K-192210

Email ID: principal-gmca@jk.gov.in

Subject: Advertisement Notice for the post of Junior Residents in Govt. Medical College Anantnag.

Advertisement Notice No. 08 GMCA of 2026

Dated: 24-04-2026

Applications through online mode are invited from eligible candidates who are domiciled in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and in possession of the prescribed academic/professional qualification i.e., MBBS & Internship from any recognized Medical College and age for the tenure post of Junior Resident in the various disciplines of Government Medical College Anantnag.

The engagement shall be for an initial period of six (06) months, extendable up to one (01) year, subject to satisfactory conduct and performance to be certified by the concerned Head of Department.

Submission of Application:

Candidates interested in applying for the said post at Government Medical College Anantnag can apply online from 27-04-2026 on www.gmcanantnag.ac.in.

The hard copy of the application forms duly signed by the candidate complete in all aspects and accompanied with a non-refundable bank draft for Rs. 500/-pledged to Principal Govt. Medical College Anantnag and payable at JK Bank Dialgam, shall be submitted in the office of Administrative Officer Govt. Medical College Anantnag by or Before 15th May 2026.

Important Instructions for candidates:

1) Candidates are advised to go through the instructions and all eligibility conditions prescribed for the post before filling in the online application form.

2) Candidates are required to upload scanned copies of original certificates. Photocopies of certificates uploaded shall not be entertained.

3) The candidate must write his/her name, parentage and date of birth strictly as per the matriculation certificate.

4) Candidates are advised in their own interest to submit online applications much before the closing date and not to wait till the last date to avoid the possibility of disconnection/inability or failure to login to the online application portal on account of heavy load on the website during the closing days.

5) Applicants are advised to fill all the fields of the online application form with due diligence and after carefully reading the terms and conditions given in the advertisement notification, request for change/correction in any particulars in the application form once submitted, will not be entertained under any circumstances.

6) Applications with blurred/illegible photograph/signature will be rejected summarily.

7) In case of fake/fabricated application/registration by misusing any dignitaries name/photo such candidate(s) shall be held responsible for the same and liable for suitable legal action under cyber/IT Act/relevant rules.

8) Candidates shall ensure that their e-mail ID and phone No's as specified in the online application form are active during the pendency of selection process.

9) After the application form is successfully submitted, it will be accepted provisionally, candidate should take the colored printout of the application form and submit hard copy of the same duly signed by the candidate along with xerox copies (self-attested) of all required certificates in the office of Administrative Officer, Government Medical College Anantnag along with non-refundable bank draft for Rs. 500/- pledged to Principal Govt. Medical College Anantnag and payable at 3K Bank Dialgam, by or before 15-05-2026

Documents Required:

Applicants must attach self-attested copies of the following documents in the prescribed order:

- 1) Date of Birth Certificate.
- 2) MBBS Marks Certificates (all professional examinations)
- 3) Attempt Certificate issued by the University/Institution.
- 4) Internship Completion Certificate.
- 5) MBBS Degree Certificate from a recognized University/Institution.
- 6) J&K Medical Council Registration Certificate.
- 7) Domicile Certificate of UT of J&K
- 8) Attempt Certificate
- 9) FMGE Pass Certificate (for foreign medical graduates)

Selection Process

Selection shall be based on a written examination, the schedule of which will be notified separately on the official website.

Terms & Conditions

- 1) The tenure shall initially be six months, extendable up to one year based on performance.
- 2) The selected candidates shall be paid monthly stipend as admissible under Government Rules.
- 3) Selection shall remain provisional until verification of all documents by the competent authority.
- 4) Any discrepancy or submission of false information shall result in cancellation of candidature and initiation of legal proceedings.
- 5) Original documents must be produced at the time of joining.
- 6) The engagement is full-time and non-practicing in nature.
- 7) Leave entitlement shall be restricted to 71/2 days of casual leave during the tenure. Excess leave shall require compensation without stipend.
- 8) Conduct shall be governed by applicable service rules.
- 9) Services are liable to termination without prior notice in case of misconduct, strike participation, or unsatisfactory performance.
- 10) Departmental allocation may be altered in the interest of institutional requirements.
- 11) A waiting list shall remain valid for 03 months from the date of publication of the selection list.
- 12) The Upper age limit for applying is 50 Years.
- 13) In case of a tie in merit, preference shall be given to the candidate with earlier Date of Birth.

Principal/Dean
Govt. Medical College, Anantnag.

No: GMCA/Estt/2026/3967-71 Dated: 24-04-2026

DIPK-746/26
DATED: 24-04-2026

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Naseer Ahmad Parry S/o: Mohd Amin Parry R/o: Green Town.

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 Haya Naseer D/o: Naseer Ahmad Parry as 23-05-2016 at Home.

Whereas through the medium of this proclamation the public at large is informed that in case any one has any objection for issuance of direction with respect to the registration of aforementioned Birth event he /she shall file the same before this court in person or through counsel within 7 days from the date of the publication of this proclamation. If the date fixed is declared holiday, the matter will be taken on the next working day.

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Mohammad Shafi Hajam S/o: Ali Mohammad Hajam R/o: Ningli Sopore.

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 Nafeesa Shafi D/o: Mohammad Shafi Hajam as 15-07-2015 at Home Ningli Sopore.

Whereas through the medium of this proclamation the public at large is informed that in case any one has any objection for issuance of direction with respect to the registration of aforementioned Birth event he /she shall file the same before this court in person or through counsel within 7 days from the date of the publication of this proclamation. If the date fixed is declared holiday, the matter will be taken on the next working day.

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Nisar Ahmad Rather S/o: Nazeer Ah Rather R/o: Warpora Tehsil Danganpora.

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 Nisar D/o: Nisar Ahmad Rather as 17-01-2023 at Mother & Child Hospital Sopore.

Whereas through the medium of this proclamation the public at large is informed that in case any one has any objection for issuance of direction with respect to the registration of aforementioned Birth event he /she shall file the same before this court in person or through counsel within 7 days from the date of the publication of this proclamation. If the date fixed is declared holiday, the matter will be taken on the next working day.

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Waseem Mushtaq Lone S/o: Mushtaq Ahmad Lone R/o: Zaloor

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 Hurmat Jaan D/o: Waseem Mushtaq Lone as 12-09-2021 at M.C.H Sopore.

Whereas through the medium of this proclamation the public at large is informed that in case any one has any objection for issuance of direction with respect to the registration of aforementioned Birth event he /she shall file the same before this court in person or through counsel within 7 days from the date of the publication of this proclamation. If the date fixed is declared holiday, the matter will be taken on the next working day.

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

J&K marks NPRD with massive public participation

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Apr 24: Jammu and Kashmir on Friday celebrated National Panchayati Raj Day (NPRD) 2026 with widespread public participation, reaffirming its commitment to strengthening grassroots democracy and community-led development.

Thousands of people across 4,291 Gram Panchayats took part in programmes held at Panchayat, Block and District levels across the Union Territory.

Observed annually on April 24, the day commemorates the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, which granted constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This year marks 33 years of the landmark reform.

The theme, "Sashakt Panchayat, Sarvangeen Vikas" (Empowered Panchayats, Holistic Development), was reflected across all events. Gram Sabhas were convened in all Panchayats, focusing on key priorities such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Own Source Revenue (OSR) and the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI), with emphasis on transparency, accountability and inclusive participation.

Awareness activities under the Nasha Mukta Abhiyan, including rallies and outreach programmes, were also organised as part of the ongoing 100-day action



plan to promote drug-free Panchayats. Cultural and youth engagement activities added to the celebrations.

Director Panchayati Raj, Sham Lal participated in programmes at Laswara Panchayat in Bishnah Block and Allah Panchayat in Arnia Block, where special Gram Sabhas were held.

He stressed aligning Panchayat development with SDGs to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047 and called for greater participation of women, Scheduled Tribes and marginalised communities. He highlighted the Panchayat

Advancement Index (PAI) as a tool for assessing performance and identifying development gaps.

Emphasising the Nasha Mukta Abhiyan, he said the initiative aims to make every Panchayat drug-free through sustained community efforts, while also underlining the need for rehabilitation of those affected by substance abuse.

He also interacted with local residents and listened to their grievances, reiterating the government's commitment to responsive and participatory grassroots governance.

Karwani reviews special relief ration scheme implementation at Jagti

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Apr 24: Relief & Rehabilitation Commissioner (M) J&K Dr Arvind Karwani on Friday led a team of officers from Relief Organization and Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department to take a detailed review of the implementation of the ration distribution in terms of the Special Relief Ration Scheme for Kashmiri/Jammu Migrants here at Mini Township Jagti.

Mini Township Jagti is the largest migrant camp in the outskirts of Jammu and houses 5252 migrant families. Dr Karwani conducted a grievance redressal camp and interacted with a large number of migrants. Most of the grievances related to supply of ration under the new Scheme. The public was assured that ration distribution from all designated 32 ration depots in District Jammu shall be ensured in a hassle free manner and migrant can avail ration from any nearest ration depot.

It was also conveyed that all relief ration card holders (irrespective of categorization into PHH, NPHH or Special category) shall continue to receive 11 Kg free ration per person per month and 1Kg sugar as per the extant scale



of ration distribution. Besides, those registered with the Relief Organisation under the non relief category (Pensioners etc) and categorized into NPHH category will also receive ration on government approved rates as per their entitlement under NFSA.

Pertinently, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, in terms of S.O 392 and S.O. 393 of 2024, both dated 13.08.2024, has made necessary amendments in the Jammu & Kashmir Food Security Rules, 2021 and the Targeted Public Distribution (Control) Order

2023 for integration of the Migrant Ration Cards into National Food Security Act (NFSA) database, to enable migrants to avail the benefits of various Government Schemes.

Further, the Government in terms of Government Order No. 27-JK(DMRRR) of 2025 dated 16.05.2025, has clarified that the existing scale of ration distribution to the migrants registered under the relief category and norms/procedures for inclusion, deletion, bifurcation, conversion and corrections etc shall continue as per the norms of Relief

Organisation. This has also been clarified through a number of public notices and jingles issued through the Department of Information & Public Relations J&K. About 400 families have so far availed the benefit of various social sector schemes.

On spot directions were issued for smooth distribution of ration to migrants. The concerned officials were directed to ensure full facilitation for completion of e-KYC formalities of all pending Relief Ration Card holders.

Interacting with the officials of the Social Welfare Department, Dr Karwani appreciated the efforts being put in for organizing special camps for facilitation of eligible migrants at various locations across Jammu.

The Zonal Officers/Camp Commandants were directed to reach out to all eligible potential beneficiaries and facilitate them in filling various online applications for availing benefits of different social sector schemes like Old Age Pension, Widow Pension, Disability Pension, Marriage Assistance, Ayushman Bharat and various scholarships. Dr Karwani was apprised that more than 100 potential beneficiaries have been facilitated at the special camp held on Friday.

Search on for UP youth who jumped off Budshah Bridge

REHAN QAYOUM MIR

Srinagar, Apr 24: Rescue teams on Friday continued an extensive search operation in river Jhelum to trace an 18-year-old youth who had jumped into the water from Budshah Bridge in Srinagar's Lal Chowk area late Wednesday night, officials said.

They said that in another incident, another man was rescued after a fresh jump attempt at the same spot within 24 hours.

Officials said that the search for missing youth was continued for the third straight day in Jhelum.

On spot directions were issued for smooth distribution of ration to migrants. The concerned officials were directed to ensure full facilitation for completion of e-KYC formalities of all pending Relief Ration Card holders.

An SDRF official said the operation was suspended in the evening due to low visibility and will resume on Saturday morning with the first light of day.

The missing person was later identified as Mohd Qurash Sadaqi (18), son of Nawab Sadaqi, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, presently staying at Chattabal, Srinagar.

The incident had occurred late Wednesday when the youth allegedly climbed the railing of Budshah Bridge and jumped into the river, prompting an immediate rescue response. CCTV footage of the incident later surfaced on social media.

Meanwhile, in another incident on Thursday, a major tragedy was averted after SDRF personnel rescued a 27-year-old man who had jumped into the Jhelum from the same bridge.

Officials said the rescue teams were already deployed at Budshah Bridge for the ongoing search operation when they noticed the man jumping into the river and swiftly pulled him out alive. He was later handed over to the police for further legal formalities.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Six detained under PSA after Sopore protest violence

WARIS FAYAZ

Sopore, Apr 24: Six persons have been detained under the Public Safety Act (PSA) in Sopore for their alleged involvement in recent protest-related violence in the town, officials said on Friday.

An official said that all six detainees have been shifted to District Jail Bhadarwah, while more people connected to the violence are being identified and further action is likely.

He said the protests began after allegations of harassment surfaced against a lecturer, leading to demonstrations that later turned violent. "Incidents of stone-pelting and damage to both public and private property were reported, including harm to school buildings and vehicles," he said.

He added that several arrests have already been made, while investigations are ongoing to trace others involved—(KNO)

Farmers urge urgent desilting of south Kashmir canals

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Apr 24: As the agricultural season approaches, residents and farmers across several parts of south Kashmir have raised concerns over the deteriorating condition of irrigation canals and streams, urging authorities to carry out immediate desilting and restoration work to prevent disruption to farming activities.

Residents from areas including Pulwama, Tral, Kakapora, Pampore, Awantipora, Litter, Rajpora, Bijbehara, Srigufwara, Mattan, Pahalgam, Dooru, Kokernag, Dialgam, Qazigund, Khudwani, Kund, DH Pora, Yaripora, and Zainapora alleged that many canals have turned



into dumping sites and have been encroached upon through illegal constructions.

"These canals were once lifelines for our fields, but today they resemble garbage dumps. In several places, their original paths have been blocked or narrowed due to unchecked construction," a farmer from Tral said. "If timely desilting is not carried out, we fear severe water

shortages during the peak sowing period."

They said irrigation canals are crucial for sustaining the region's agriculture-dependent economy, particularly for paddy cultivation and horticulture. Locals expressed frustration over what they described as a recurring pattern of delayed action by the concerned departments.

"Every year, desilting

work begins when the irrigation demand is already at its peak. By then, the damage is done. Crops suffer due to the lack of timely water supply," said another resident from Bijbehara. "The authorities must complete the cleaning process well before the start of the season."

In addition to canal restoration, locals have also called for a thorough inspection and trial run of irrigation pump stations and associated infrastructure.

The residents said ensuring the functionality of machinery in advance would help avoid last-minute breakdowns that often leave farmers struggling.

Continued on
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Police arrest 14 drug peddlers

KNO

Srinagar, Apr 24: In continuation of the ongoing mass anti-drug campaign under the 100-day Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyaan, Police have arrested fourteen drug peddlers in various parts of valley and recovered contraband substances from their possession.

According to a statement, in Ganderbal, during naka checking, a police party of PP Shadipora intercepted a vehicle (Ertiga) bearing registration No. JK01BB-1295 with two persons on board. They have been identified as Bilal Ahmad Bhat son of Ghulam Mohd Bhat resident of Batwina and Mudasir Ahmad Hajam son of Abdul Hameed Hajam resident of Arampora, Ganderbal. During search, 100 bottles of Codeine Phosphate were recovered from their possession. They have been arrested and the vehicle used in the commission of crime has also been seized.

In Anantnag, acting on a specific tip-off, a police team of Police Post Sangam, raided the residence of Mohammad Younis Dar of Semthan and recovered 246 grams of charas (08 sticks). The accused was arrested subsequently. At Ashajipora Bypass, a naka party of Police Post Janglatmandi

intercepted a vehicle. The contraband substance was recovered from two accused boarding the vehicle. They have been identified as Fardin Khan @Sameer Khan of Qazi Mohallah and Numaan Riyaz Khan of Lazibal. Similarly, during naka checking at Donipawa, one person identified as Nisar Ahmad Shergojri of Sherpora was apprehended with a substance resembling poppy straw. In another operation, Police Post Bus Stand apprehended Adnan Ishaq Mir of Ashajipora at Tarbal Chee and recovered approximately 2 grams of heroin-like substance from his possession.

In Budgam, Police acted on credible information regarding illegal possession of narcotic substances intended for sale to local youth at a residence in the Choudhary Bagh Subden area of Budgam. Acting promptly, a police party from Police Post Soibugh conducted a search operation at the specified location. During search, approximately 2.713 kilograms of charas powder-like substance was recovered from the residential premises. The accused has been identified as Hilal Ahmad Sheikh son of Bashir Ahmad Sheikh resident of Choudhary Bagh Subden, Budgam. He was apprehended on the spot.

Continued on
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WE-AI club leads valley-wide movement on women empowerment, AI

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Apr 25: In a remarkable student-driven initiative, the WE-AI (Women Empowerment-Artificial Intelligence) Club, founded by Taleyn Tattheer Khan and co-founded by Aiza Naveed Shah, under the mentorship of Priyanka Bharghav from Admit Kard, successfully conducted its maiden series of workshops and seminars from April 20 to April 24 across the Kashmir Valley.

The program witnessed enthusiastic participation from students across leading institutions, including Kashmir Harvard, Green Valley Educational Institute, Presentation Convent School, Crescent Public School, SRM Welkin Sopore, Birla Open

Minds International School, and GD Goenka Public School. The initiative aimed to inspire young minds—especially girls—to explore opportunities in engineering and Artificial Intelligence while promoting equality, innovation, and leadership.

Through interactive sessions, live demonstrations, and collaborative activities, participants were introduced to the fundamentals of AI, real-world technological applications, and problem-solving approaches. The workshops emphasized the role of women in shaping the future of science and technology.

"WE-AI is not just a club; it is a platform to inspire confidence, curiosity, and leadership among young women who aspire to step into the

world of technology and innovation," said Taleyn Tattheer Khan, Founder.

"Our aim is to make AI and engineering accessible and engaging for students at the school level, while encouraging them to think beyond textbooks and work towards real-world impact," added Aiza Naveed Shah, Co-Founder.

Mentor Priyanka Bharghav (Admit Kard) highlighted the importance of early exposure to emerging technologies, noting that such initiatives help shape future-ready students equipped with technical knowledge and social awareness.

With its successful maiden outreach, the WE-AI Club has laid the foundation for a sustained movement aimed at nurturing innovation, leadership, and empowerment among youth in the region.



EDITORIAL

Lights, Camera, Kashmir: A Cinematic Opportunity Beckons

The Jammu and Kashmir government's decision to host a prestigious international film festival is a welcome and visionary step that promises to weave together the region's rich cultural history, tourism potential, and cinematic aspirations. By drawing inspiration from the International Film Festival of India in Goa, the administration has signalled its intent to position J&K not merely as a breathtaking backdrop for films but as a serious destination for global cinematic engagement. This initiative, if executed with professionalism and sustained commitment, could transform

the Valley's creative economy. The benefits are manifold. An international film festival will bring filmmakers, critics, artists, and cinema lovers from across the world, creating a vibrant confluence of cultures. For a region often portrayed through narrow lenses, this is an opportunity to showcase its diverse stories, its artistic depth, and its warm hospitality. The festival will stimulate local businesses—hotels, restaurants, transport, handicrafts—and generate employment for event managers, technicians, and cultural workers. The decision to extend screenings beyond Srinagar to

locations like Baderwah, Pahalgam, Gulmarg, and Jammu is particularly commendable, ensuring that the economic and cultural benefits reach emerging destinations as well. However, the success of this maiden festival will depend on meticulous planning and execution. First, the dedicated committee must be constituted without delay, with representation from cinema professionals, cultural experts, tourism officials, and security agencies. Second, the selection of an experienced event management agency is critical—the agency must have a proven track record of organising international

cultural events, not just local functions. Third, curatorial quality will define the festival's reputation. A mix of acclaimed international cinema, regional masterpieces, and Kashmir-focused stories will create a compelling program. Fourth, international outreach through film bodies, embassies, and cultural councils will ensure global participation. The timing—after the Amarnath Yatra—is practical, allowing the festival to leverage the tourist infrastructure already in place. But the government must also address potential challenges: security arrangements for international guests,

seamless venue logistics, accommodation availability, and transportation connectivity. A dedicated website, early ticket sales, and media partnerships will build buzz domestically and internationally. This is a moment of immense possibility. Cinema has the power to heal, to connect, and to project a region's true soul beyond the headlines. By rolling out the red carpet for the world's filmmakers and cinephiles, Jammu and Kashmir can script a new narrative—one of creativity, confidence, and cultural leadership. The lights are ready. The cameras are waiting. Now, action.

Rashtriya Panchayati Raj Diwas: Strengthening Grassroots Democracy In India

Press Information Bureau

Panchayati Raj Institutions form the backbone of India's grassroots democracy and have deep historical roots in village self-governance. They were strengthened by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1993. With over 2.5 lakh Panchayats and 24.04 lakh elected representatives, including 49.75% women, local governance has become more inclusive. Digital interventions and platforms like eGramSwaraj, Meri Panchayat, Panchayat NIRNAY, AuditOnline, SVAMITVA, Gram Manchitra, SabhaSaar, Local Government Directory, Training Management Portal and Gram Urja Swaraj are improving transparency and efficiency. Strong funding support, capacity building, and scheme like Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) further enhance capacity building, participatory planning and sustainable development.

Local Self-Governance and Power Decentralisation in India

National Panchayati Raj Diwas is observed every year on 24th April across the nation. This day commemorates the establishment of the Panchayati Raj System as a formal structure of local self-governance. It marks the implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, which came into force in 1993. This amendment granted constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions. The provisions related to Panchayats are laid down in Part IX of the Constitution of India.

On this occasion, the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI)-2.0 is being launched at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi along with three illustrated publications under the Panchayat Dharohar Initiative. A monograph on the rural heritage of Tripura, a monograph on the rural heritage of Tirupati, and Uttarkashi: Saumya Kashi – The Soul of Himalayan Heritage.

The Panchayati Raj system strengthens democracy at the local level. It enables social and political empowerment by bringing governance closer to the people. Across the country, there are more than 2.5 lakh Panchayats, comprising about 24.04 lakh elected representatives. Notably, women constitute approximately 49.75% of these representatives, reflecting a significant shift towards inclusive local governance.

The importance of this system is best seen in everyday life. In many villages, small needs like repairing a handpump, building a drainage system, or fixing a school classroom directly affect daily living. Earlier, such issues often waited for long approvals from distant offices. With Panchayati Raj Institutions, decision-making has moved closer to the people.

Historical Background of Panchayati Raj System

The Panchayati Raj System has roots in ancient India, where village assemblies (sabhas and samitis) managed local affairs. During British rule, this system weakened due to centralized administration. After independence, the need for decentralized governance led to the recommendation of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957), which proposed a three-tier Panchayati Raj structure. Rajasthan became the first state to implement it in 1959. This system was formally strengthened by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, granting constitutional status to Panchayats and making Panchayati Raj institutions mandatory.

Structure and Objectives of Panchayati Raj Institutions

The Panchayati Raj system is based on the principle of decentralisation. Power is transferred from central and state governments to elected representatives at the village level.

The system operates through a three-tier structure:

Gram Panchayat (GP): The first level is the Gram Panchayat, which functions at the village level. It is responsible for basic civic administration and local development activities such as water supply, sanitation, street lighting, and maintenance of village infrastructure.

Block Panchayat (BP): The second level is

the Block Panchayat, which functions at the intermediate level. It coordinates development plans across multiple villages and ensures better implementation of government schemes.

District Panchayat (DP): The third level is the District Panchayat, which operates at the district level. It supervises and integrates development activities across blocks and ensures effective planning and resource allocation.

This structure ensures that governance is not just concentrated at the higher levels but is distributed closer to the people. This allows for better understanding of local needs. These bodies are elected and are responsible for local planning, infrastructure, public services, and welfare programs.

Gram Sabha: Foundation of Local Democracy

The Gram Sabha is the general body of all registered voters in a village and represents the most direct form of democracy. It is the only permanent unit in the Panchayati Raj system and is not constituted for a particular period. Although it serves as the foundation of the Panchayati Raj, it is not among the three tiers. The powers and functions of Gram Sabha are fixed by state legislature by law. It approves development plans, monitors expenditure, ensures transparency, and provides a platform for villagers to raise issues and participate in decision-making. Based on direct participation, it strengthens accountability and ensures every voter has the right to attend meetings and express opinions.

Objectives of Panchayati Raj System

The Panchayati Raj System is guided by a set of core objectives aimed at strengthening local governance and improving developmental outcomes:

Ensuring active participation of people in the planning and implementation of development programmes.

Enhancing accountability by making elected representatives directly answerable to local communities.

Improving the efficiency and responsiveness of public service delivery in rural areas.

Enabling more targeted and effective implementation of government schemes through local institutions.

Promoting inclusive development by ensuring representation of marginalised groups, including women, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes.

Initiatives to Strengthen Panchayati Raj System

Over the years, the Government has introduced several initiatives to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions and improve their functioning both on the ground and in the digital sphere. Panchayati Raj Institutions are undergoing rapid digital transformation, improving transparency, efficiency, and accountability. Over 95% of villages now have 3G/4G connectivity, strengthening last-mile service delivery. Common Service Centres, run by over 6.5 lakh Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), provide easy access to digital services. Around 2.18 lakh Gram Panchayats are service-ready, with nearly 2.14 lakh already connected.

To build on this progress, the Government has launched several initiatives that enhance efficiency, expand access, and empower rural communities.

Flagship Digital & Technological Initiatives

SVAMITVA Scheme: Empowering Rural India through Technology

The SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) Scheme is a central sector initiative of the Government of India, launched on 24th April 2021. It aims to provide legal ownership rights to rural households by mapping inhabited village areas using drone and GIS technology and issuing property cards.

The scheme uses CORS (Continuously Operating Reference Stations), which are permanently fixed ground stations that receive satellite signals to provide highly accurate location data. These stations are integrated with control centres where data is processed to support precise mapping.

The scheme seeks to create accurate land

records, reduce disputes, and enable villagers to use property as a financial asset. It also supports Gram Panchayat-level planning and strengthens rural governance.

Key Highlights:

As on 11th March 2026, drone survey has been completed in 3.29 lakh villages out of the targeted 3.44 lakh villages.

3.10 crore property cards have been prepared for 1.87 lakh villages and 2.65 crore cards have been distributed.

SabhaSaar: AI-Powered Meeting Documentation

SabhaSaar is an AI-based tool developed that automatically prepares minutes of Gram Sabha meetings. It converts audio and video recordings into structured documentation using Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing. It reduces manual workload and strengthens monitoring, improved service delivery, and accountability in local governance.

The tool supports 23 regional languages through integration with Bhashini, the Government's national language translation platform.

As on January 2026, SabhaSaar has been used by more than 1 lakh Gram Panchayats.

eGramSwaraj – Digital Platform for Panchayats

eGramSwaraj is a user-friendly web portal that improves transparency in planning, progress reporting, financial management, and tracking of assets in Panchayats. It is linked with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS), which allows online transfer of Central Finance Commission funds from States to Panchayati Raj Institutions. This also enables Panchayats to make real-time payments to vendors and service providers, making the system faster and more transparent. The platform is available in 22 Indian languages, strengthening accessibility and adoption at the grassroots level.

Key Highlights (2025–26):

Over 2.55 lakh Gram Panchayats uploaded their development plans on the platform

Over 2.59 lakh Gram Panchayats onboarded Public Financial Management System (PFMS) integration

Panchayati Raj Institutions transferred 53,342 crores through the eGramSwaraj-PFMS interface

Over 2.50 lakh Panchayati Raj Institutions made online payments

Over 1.6 crore vendors registered on the platform, reflecting its scale and widespread adoption

Gram Urja Swaraj

Gram Urja Swaraj, under eGramSwaraj, is a digital dashboard that tracks renewable energy assets at the Gram Panchayat level in real time. It currently covers 2,080 Gram Panchayats, of these, 2,020 use solar energy, 60 use hydel (water) power, 69 use wind energy, and 106 use biogas systems, strengthening transparency and data-driven governance. Panchayats are also integrated with the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) for efficient procurement, alongside regular capacity-building programmes for better governance and implementation.

Meri Panchayat: Digital Platform for Transparent Rural Governance

The Meri Panchayat App is an integrated m-Governance platform designed and developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC). It aims to empower rural communities by improving better governance, accountability, and citizen participation in Panchayat affairs.

The initiative aligns with the government's commitment to strengthen local self-governance and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The app is powered by e-Gram Swaraj and other portals of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) and various ministries.

Capacity Building & Training

Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)

The Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) is a centrally sponsored scheme aimed at strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions through capacity building, institutional development, and infrastructure support.

The main objectives of the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) are:

Build leadership skills of elected Panchayat members so Gram Panchayats can work effectively.

Develop governance capabilities of PRIs to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through local interventions.

Strengthen Gram Sabhas to increase people's participation in local governance.

Use technology and e-governance to enhance accountability and services.

Give more powers and responsibilities to Panchayats as per the Constitution and the PESA Act, 1996.

Key Achievements (2025–26) include:

Over 45 lakh participants were provided training, including elected representatives and Panchayat functionaries.

Exposure visit of 33,142 participants were conducted for cross learning.

632 Panchayat Learning Centres were set up to enhance the outreach of training and cross learning.

1,087 Gram Panchayat Bhawans constructed and computers were procured to strengthen Panchayat infrastructure.

Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayat (MWFPG)

The Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayat (MWFPG) is an institutional initiative aimed at strengthening women's leadership in local governance. It focuses on building inclusive and gender-sensitive Panchayats that ensure women's participation along with safety, rights, and empowerment at the grassroots level.

The programme is aligned with the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). States and Union Territories are encouraged to begin with Theme 9: Women-Friendly Panchayat, under which one Panchayat in each district is developed as a model.

To support implementation, capacity-building has been strengthened to support awareness, guidance, and on-ground execution, promoting stronger and more effective women-led local governance.

Strengthening the Capacity of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs)

The Government has launched "Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan" to enhance leadership, communication, and decision-making skills of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs). The focus is on practical and interactive learning for real governance situations.

As part of this effort, Ministry has launched a Special Training Module aimed at strengthening the leadership, communication, and negotiation skills of Women Elected Representatives (WERs). Designed as an interactive, game-based learning experience, the module combines theoretical inputs with practical skill-building to enable more effective participation in grassroots governance. So far, 1,48,904 Women Elected Representatives have been trained under this specialised module, contributing to enhanced confidence, decision-making capacity, and leadership at the Panchayat level.

Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS)

The Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS) is an initiative launched to actively engage India's youth in grassroots democracy. It is implemented in collaboration with the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL) and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA). The initiative involves students of Classes 9 and 10 from Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) and Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs). They participate in mock Gram Sabha and Panchayat meetings. This helps them understand how local governance works.

The initiative aligns with the vision of Digital India, Good Governance, and Atmanirbhar Bharat, promoting participatory democracy among youth. It supports the broader goal of building empowered, self-reliant, and development-oriented Panchayats under the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Empowering Tribal Communities through PESA Implementation

The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act) extends the provisions of Panchayats to the Scheduled Areas, strengthening Gram Sabha-led governance across tribal

regions. It covers 10 States, reaching 77,564 villages, 22,040 Panchayats, and 664 Blocks. PESA spans across 45 districts in their entirety, and to 63 districts in part, where only selected areas fall under its jurisdiction. This structure supports decentralised, community-driven governance.

PESA Act is applicable to Fifth Schedule areas of 10 States - Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana. Nine States have notified their State PESA Rules, except Odisha.

To strengthen implementation, a Centre of Excellence on PESA has been established at the Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU), Amarkantak. The initiative focuses on customary practices, model Gram Sabhas, IEC materials in tribal languages, and best practices documentation, supported by a Programme Advisory Board.

Institutional Strengthening and Field Support

During Financial Year 2025-26, under RGSA, all 10 PESA States appointed dedicated staff at State, District, Block, and Gram Panchayat levels. More than 12,500 personnel are currently engaged in on-ground implementation of PESA.

Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

1744 training programmes conducted across PESA States during FY 2025-26

1,03,384 participants trained, including:

- 11,712 at State level
- 40,467 at District level
- 51,205 at Block level

Jharkhand alone trained 47,242 participants, reflecting strong grassroots outreach

In addition, State-level Master Trainer programmes covered key themes such as Gram Sabha strengthening, Minor Forest Produce (MFP), minor minerals, land alienation, money lending, intoxicants regulation, and customary dispute resolution.

40 best practices of Gram Sabhas related to PESA have been published as "PESA in Action: Stories of Strength and Self Governance." The compendium has been translated in Hindi, 4 regional and 4 major tribal languages.

Financial & Economic Strengthening

Rural governance in India has been strengthened through increased fiscal decentralisation and rising public investment in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Under the 15th Finance Commission (2021–26), about 2.36 lakh crore was recommended for Rural Local Bodies, including Gram, Block, and District Panchayats. This has further increased to nearly 4.35 lakh crore under the 16th Finance Commission (2026–31), significantly enhancing local financial autonomy.

These funds are provided as untied grants for local needs and tied grants for basic services like sanitation and drinking water, ensuring flexibility along with accountability.

Rural development funding has also seen a sharp rise, with Union Budget allocations increasing by over 211% in the last decade, from 87,765 crore (2016–17) to 2.73 lakh crore (2026–27). This has strengthened convergence with schemes such as the Viksit Bharat - G RAM G Act, 2025 (earlier MGNREGA), Jal Jeevan Mission, and Swachh Bharat Mission, improving infrastructure and service delivery at the village level.

Overall, higher Finance Commission transfers and increased budgetary support have made rural governance more financially empowered, autonomous, and development-oriented.

Democracy at the Grassroots: Closing Note

Panchayati Raj Institutions embody participatory democracy in India, evolving from village assemblies into constitutionally empowered units of local self-governance. They drive inclusive development by aligning governance with grassroots needs and aspirations. Celebrating National Panchayati Raj Day highlights their role in strengthening local democracy and participation. Overall, they have made rural governance more responsive and accountable, reinforcing that national progress rests on empowered, self-reliant villages.

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

Satish Sharma meets Union Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya in Srinagar Pushes for strengthening sports ecosystem in J&K

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, APRIL 24: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Transport, Youth Services & Sports, and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma Friday held a detailed meeting with Union Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, on the sidelines of the upcoming Chintan Shivir being hosted in Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier, the Minister warmly welcomed the visiting dignitaries and extended his appreciation for their presence in Jammu and Kashmir for the important deliberations aimed at strengthening the sports landscape across the country.

During the meeting, Satish Sharma, as per an official statement, discussed in detail a comprehensive roadmap for giving a significant fillip to sports development in Jammu and Kashmir, with particular emphasis on expanding outreach to border and far-flung areas. He underscored that youth residing in remote and underserved regions possess immense untapped potential, which can be channelized effectively through targeted interventions



and improved access to sports infrastructure.

The Minister highlighted the ongoing efforts of the Jammu and Kashmir Government to promote a vibrant sports culture, including the organization of local tournaments, talent identification programmes, and initiatives aimed at engaging youth in constructive and nation-building activities. He stressed the need for strengthening grassroots-level infrastructure to ensure that aspiring athletes, irrespective of their geographical location, have access to quality training and facilities.

Satish Sharma also sought liberal financial assistance from the Government of India for upgrading existing sports infrastructure and establishing

modern, state-of-the-art facilities across Jammu and Kashmir. He emphasized the importance of developing multipurpose indoor stadiums, playfields, and high-performance training centres equipped with advanced coaching support and sports science facilities.

The discussions further focused on enhancing collaboration between the Union Ministry and the Jammu and Kashmir Government in organizing national-level sporting events in Jammu and Kashmir, which would not only provide exposure to local talent but also position the region as a prominent sporting destination.

Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya appreciated the proactive initiatives being undertaken

by the Jammu and Kashmir Government and lauded the focused approach towards youth engagement and sports development. He assured full support and cooperation from the Government of India in strengthening the sports ecosystem in the region, particularly in underserved and border areas.

Satish Sharma reiterated the commitment of the Government towards harnessing the energy and potential of youth through sports, innovation, and inclusive development. He expressed confidence that the outcomes of the upcoming Chintan Shivir would pave the way for new strategies and collaborative efforts to further accelerate sports development in Jammu and Kashmir.

Javed Rana reviews development scenario in Doda Stresses accountability, grassroots impact

KT News Desk

DODA, APRIL 24: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana Friday chaired a high-level review meeting at the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex, here, to evaluate the progress of key developmental initiatives across the district.

Legislators Shakti Raj Parihar, Daleep Singh Parihar, Deputy Commissioner, Krishan Lal, Chief Engineer, I&FC Jammu Manoj Gupta, Chief Engineer PHE, Hanief Choudhary and all District level Officers participated in the meeting.

While reviewing the progress across key sectors, Javed Rana, as per an official statement, underscored the need for strict adherence to timelines, enhanced inter-departmental coordination to ensure that development effectively reaches the grassroots with transparency and efficiency.

The Minister reviewed the progress under AMRUT 2.0, CAPEX, irrigation, flood control and rural development works. He stressed expediting these initiatives to boost agricultural productivity and



strengthen irrigation infrastructure for farmers.

While emphasising the need for timely resolution of forest-related issues, the Minister called for strict verification processes before project execution and decisive action against obstructions affecting development works.

He also called for strengthening monitoring process through the PARIVESH portal and promoting projects related to ecological conservation, check dams, and public recreation.

Special attention was given to improving water supply and irrigation potential in Assar and adjoining areas to boost vegetable cultivation and local livelihoods.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on tribal welfare initiatives, Forest Rights Act (FRA),

development of tribal hostels, implementation of Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan, and provision of mobile medical services in remote areas.

The Minister instructed concerned departments to prepare detailed project reports (DPRs) focusing on road connectivity, lift irrigation, power supply, and water infrastructure in tribal regions. He further emphasized timely completion and effective utilization of funds allocated for tribal hostels.

The Chief Medical Officer Doda was directed to operationalize mobile medical units in tribal belts at the earliest.

Javed Rana emphasised upon the officers to gear up their efforts for timely completion of important projects and improving public service delivery in the district.

NASHA MUKT J&K ABHIYAN

Ganderbal holds Cyclothon



KT News Desk

GANDERBAL, APRIL 24: In a spirited effort to instil healthy habits among young people and reinforce the message of a drug-free society, the District Administration Ganderbal Friday organised a Cyclothon as part of the Nasha Mukta Abhiyan- a 100-Day Campaign being observed across Jammu & Kashmir.

Held with considerable enthusiasm, the Cyclothon was flagged-off from Clock Tower Duderhama Ganderbal witnessing participation from Chief Education Officer Ganderbal, Principal Government College of Physical Education Gadoora, District Youth Services and Sports Officer besides students from across the district in a collective display of energy, discipline, and social awareness.

Students drawn from 15 schools across Ganderbal participated in the Cyclothon, reflecting a strong sense of commitment towards physical fitness and social responsibility.

The event, as per an official statement, culminated at Government College of Physical Education Gadoora with Haris Hameed of Qamria Model Higher Secondary School,

Ganderbal bagging the first position, while Mohammad Faizan of Sultania English Medium School, Saloora Ganderbal and Hanzil Imtiyaz of Islamia Hanifia Model School, Haran Ganderbal secured the second and third positions respectively.

The officers of District Administration present on the occasion appreciated the active participation of students and commended the efforts of the organising team.

Emphasising the broader purpose of such events, they noted that initiatives of this nature play a vital role in channeling the energy of young people towards constructive pursuits, encouraging them to embrace a healthy lifestyle and steer clear of substance abuse.

Nasha Mukta Pledge was also taken on the occasion, reaffirming the participants' commitment towards building a drug-free society.

Concluding on a purposeful note, the event sent out a strong and unambiguous message that fitness, discipline, and a drug-free way of life are not just ideals but a shared responsibility of every citizen, especially the youth who represent the future of society.

Mega Yoga event held in Anantnag

KT News Desk

ANANTNAG, APRIL 24: In connection with the ongoing Nasha Mukta J&K Abhiyan, the Department of AYUSH Anantnag Friday organized a Mega Yoga event at Shaheed Himayun Muzamil Memorial Government Boys Degree College, Khanabal.

The event, as per an official statement, was conducted with the objective of promoting a healthy lifestyle and spreading awareness regarding the ill effects of drug abuse among the youth. The programme witnessed active participation from officials of various departments including Youth Services & Sports, Information, Education besides faculty and students of the College.

In his address, District AYUSH Officer, Dr. Abdul Rehman Rather emphasized the critical role of yoga and the AYUSH system in overall



well-being, urging the youth to denounce substance abuse and adopt healthy and productive practices for a brighter future. He expressed his appreciation for the coordinated efforts of all participating departments in promoting the message for a fit and drug free society.

By highlighting the importance of physical fitness and mental well-being, the yoga session served as a powerful demonstration of how meditation and outdoor activities

can act as an effective tool in combating substance abuse and encouraging a disciplined way of life.

Throughout the session, the students and participants engaged in yoga asanas and awareness activities, demonstrating a firm commitment to the message of "Say No to Drugs, Yes to Life."

Participants pledged to disseminate the message of the campaign and contribute positively toward building a healthy and drug free society.

Parent Teacher Meetings held across schools in Shopian

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, APRIL 24: As per the scheduled activities under the ongoing Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan, Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs) were organized across various schools in District Shopian, including HS Vehil, HS Kanjullar, and Springdales School Batapora Shopian among others.

The meetings were

conducted with the objective of sensitizing parents about the growing concerns of drug abuse and the importance of early awareness and preventive measures.

During the sessions, participants, as per an official statement, were informed about the harmful effects of substance abuse on physical, mental, and social well being, and the crucial role families and schools play in guiding

children towards a healthy and disciplined lifestyle.

Teacher councellers emphasized the need for strong communication between parents and educators to identify early signs of substance abuse and to provide timely support and guidance to students.

Parents were encouraged to remain vigilant, foster a supportive home environment, and actively participate in awareness efforts.

DDMA Baramulla conducts civil defence mock drill

KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, APRIL 24: District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) Baramulla Friday conducted a comprehensive Civil Defence Mock Drill at Showkat Ali Stadium to strengthen disaster preparedness, improve inter-agency coordination, and enhance emergency response systems across the district. The drill, as per an official statement, witnessed active participation from multiple agencies including Police, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), NCC cadets, CRPF, CISF, Home Guards, and civil administration officials, reflecting a coordinated and multi-disciplinary approach to disaster management.

The primary objective of the exercise was to streamline coordination among various departments, ensure effective response during emergencies, and prepare teams for real-life situations while minimizing risks to life and property.

During the drill, key aspects



such as rescue operations, evacuation procedures, response time, and adherence to public safety protocols were thoroughly tested.

The exercise also simulated emergency scenarios, including blackout situations, aimed at enhancing preparedness among students, staff, and the general public.

Participants were trained in evacuation protocols, crisis communication, and coordinated response strategies, providing them with practical insights into

managing emergency situations efficiently. The drill emphasized the importance of timely intervention and collective action in reducing risks during disasters.

The mock exercise recreated real-time emergency conditions, including search and rescue operations, evacuation drills, and emergency medical response. Students and staff actively participated in the programme, contributing to a realistic and impactful training experience.

Disaster Preparedness: Shopian holds civil defence air raid mock drill

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, APRIL 24: In a concerted effort to strengthen disaster preparedness and emergency response systems, the District Administration Shopian, under the aegis of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), successfully conducted a comprehensive Civil Defence Air Raid Mock Drill.

The mock drill, as per an official statement, commenced at Government Degree College Shopian, designated as the primary site for the simulated air raid scenario.

The operation witnessed coordinated participation of Civil Defence personnel, SDRF, Jammu & Kashmir Police, Fire & Emergency Services, Health Department, and trained volunteers.

Key components of the exercise included activation of early warning systems through sirens and public



address mechanisms, evacuation drills, emergency first aid response, and coordinated movement of rescue teams and vehicles.

The rescue and search phase was executed through a structured multi team mechanism involving specialized units.

The AST Party conducted sweeps for detection of potential threats, while search teams assessed the area for hazardous

materials. The cordon and control team secured the site, and the instruments party carried out debris clearance and victim rescue operations.

The tagging team, assisted by medical personnel, conducted triage of victims based on severity, while the lifting and stretcher teams ensured safe evacuation and transportation of the injured. A final assessment team also carried out

a comprehensive survey of the affected area and documented the response.

The operation was conducted under the supervision of Incident Commander, Lateef Ahmad (ASI SDRF), with overall guidance and coordination by DySP, Tanveer Ahmad, (Nodal Officer SDRF).

The District Administration reiterated that such exercises are part of routine preparedness initiatives aimed at strengthening coordinated response mechanisms and enhancing community resilience in the face of emergencies.

Among others present were Additional District Development Commissioner Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone, Principal GDC Shopian, Prof. Tariq Hussain Mir, DySP Headquarter, Imtiyaz Ahmad Mir, DYSSO Shopian, Sunil Kumar, Tehsildar Shopian, Anjum Bashir Khan, BDOs, and other district officers.

Rana holds convention in Doda, assures redress of public grievances



KT News Desk

DODA, APRIL 24: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, on Friday convened a convention during which the people apprised him the issues concerning their respective areas.

During the interactive session, the Minister, as per an official statement, engaged extensively with the general public, who raised a wide range of pressing issues and developmental concerns affecting different parts of the Chenab Valley.

The participants highlighted the grievances such as lack of compensation for the flood-affected families, drinking water shortage in Doda town, delay in regularisation and wage disbursement of daily wage workers, need for repair and desilting of irrigation khuls, delay in forest clearances for development works and slow pace of implementation of water supply schemes under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

The participants stressed that timely intervention in these areas is essential for improving the quality of life in the district. Responding to the concerns,

Rana assured that the government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is committed towards addressing the genuine public issues with urgency and accountability. He said that all the matters raised during the convention would be taken up for prompt and time-bound resolution in coordination with the concerned departments.

It is pertinent to mention that the Minister is currently on an extensive tour of the Chenab Valley and, as part of the outreach, will hold public meetings, interact directly with the citizens and chair the district-level review meetings to monitor the developmental works and ensure effective implementation of key government schemes.

The Minister further underscored the importance of responsive governance and said efforts are being made to bridge the developmental gaps across the regions and sub-regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

Calling upon the stakeholders to play a proactive role at the grassroots level, Rana urged them to maintain close contact with the public and act as a vital link between the government and the people.

Javid Dar attends North Zone Agri Ministers' Conference in Lucknow

Highlights J&K's agricultural transformation

KT News Desk

Lucknow, Apr 24: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar on Friday attended the North Zone Agriculture Ministers' Conference held in Lucknow.

The conference was chaired by Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shivraj Singh Chouhan and was attended by Agriculture Ministers from various North Zone states.

During the conference, the Javid Dar presented the remarkable progress and transformation achieved in the agriculture and horticulture sectors of Jammu and Kashmir. He highlighted key initiatives undertaken by the government to boost productivity, enhance



farmer income and promote sustainable agricultural practices across the Union Territory. Javid Dar emphasized the need for strengthening market linkages to ensure better price realization for farmers. He also underlined the importance of adopting sustainable

and climate-resilient farming practices to secure long-term growth in the sector.

The Minister further shared policy suggestions aimed at farmer empowerment, including improved access to modern technology, infrastructure development and enhanced

support mechanisms for growers and farming communities.

The conference served as a significant platform for deliberations on region-specific challenges and collaborative strategies to further strengthen the agriculture sector across North India.



Lt Gen Harpal Singh, Director General, Border Roads called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday

Srinagar to face 36-hour water disruption from today

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Apr 24: Many parts of Srinagar city are set to face a 36-hour disruption in potable water supply from April 25 to April 26, following urgent repair works on the Sindh Power Canal (Phase II) by CMD Ganderbal, the Water Works Division Srinagar said in a public notice.

The notice issued by office of the Executive Engineer Water Works Division Srinagar, a copy of which was accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), reads the shutdown will affect raw water supply to the Alusteng and Rangil treatment plants, impacting several major residential and adjoining areas across the city.

The authorities have also advised residents to store adequate water in advance and assured that control room facilities will remain operational round the clock for assistance.

"The general public is hereby informed that, due to urgent

repair works of the Sindh Power Canal (Phase IInd) scheduled to be carried out by CMD Ganderbal on 25th & 26th April 2026, the raw water supply to the Water Treatment Plants Alusteng and Rangil are likely to be affected," it reads.

"Consequently, the potable water supply in major parts of Srinagar City and adjoining areas may experience disruption for approximately 36 hours, commencing from 6:00 A.M on Saturday (25.04.2026) to 6:00 P.M on Sunday (26.04.2026). The inconvenience caused is deeply regretted," it reads.

The order reads, the affected areas include: Zakoora, Gulab Bagh, Alusteng, Khalmulla, Habak, Naseem Bagh, Busserbugh, Malla Bagh, Pandach, Buchpora, Soura, Anchar, Bohlouchpora, Zoonimar, Nowshera, Bagh I Ali Mardan Khan, Zadbil, Hawal, Alamgari Bazar, Rajouri Kadal, Nallahmar, Nawakadal, Bohori Kadal, Nowhatta, Lal

Bazar, Hazratbal, Sadribal, Nigeen, Saída Kadal, Parts of Rainawari, Khanyar, Nowpora, Nawab Bazar, Ganpatyar, Habba Kadal, Baghwanpora, Basant Bazar, Chota Bazar, Karan Nagar, Chattabal, Kawdara, Eidgah, Mahrajgunj, Zaina Kadal, Saidpora, Firdous Abad, Parts of Batmaloo, Qamarwari and adjacent areas.

"General Public is hereby notified through the medium of this notice to store sufficient supply of water to meet the demands. For any complaints/grievances regarding scarcity / shortage of water supply, general public are requested to contact the PHE Provincial Control Room which remains functional round the clock for the service of the general public."

It further reads, the Contact Numbers of Provincial Control Room Water Works Div. Sgr. are as under: 0194-2477207, 0194-2452047 (Landline Numbers) and 9419413914, 9419413915 (WhatsApp Numbers). (KNO)

UK adds names of 33,000 Indian soldiers missing from First World War memorial

PTI

London, Apr 24: The names of 33,000 Indian Army soldiers who died in the First World War but missing from a memorial in Iraq have finally been commemorated in digital form. Iraq, then Mesopotamia, had been the scene of the British Empire's largest operations outside of Europe in the early 20th century.

The Commonwealth War Grave Commission (CWGC), a charity with a remit of commemorating all Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two World Wars, have introduced new digital name panels for the Basra Memorial in Iraq to ensure the missing names can be included.

Launched earlier this month, the digital memorial includes the names of Indian soldiers brought together for the first time alongside over 46,000 Commonwealth service personnel.



"The Mesopotamia Campaign was one of the toughest campaigns in the First World War with Indian soldiers dying in the tens of thousands; yet their names were never added on the Basra memorial," said Shrabani Basu, CWGC Global Advisory Panel member. "It is wonderful to see the new digital panels and to finally see the 33,000 Indian names displayed as they always should have been complete with ranks and regiments. A historical wrong is being righted. Their

sacrifice will never be forgotten," said Basu, the author of "For King and Another Country: Indian Soldiers on the Western Front 1914-18".

A significant physical update to the memorial was difficult as Iraq is not considered safe for travel and operational work at present. A digital option was chosen as an alternative until the site can be properly assessed and all the names can be properly commemorated.

"The launch of these panels marks an important moment

for the Commission and the commemoration of the Indian Army's dead of the Mesopotamia Campaign," said Dr George Hay, CWGC Official Historian.

"For the first time, the names of these men will be displayed as they should have been nearly a century ago, restoring to them the honour they deserve. This takes us a step closer to fully reversing this historical inequality while also helping people around the world engage with these casualties and their stories," he said.

Many Indian casualties of the First World War were historically commemorated numerically or through memorial registers, rather than by name.

This is one of the several known inequalities in commemoration that CWGC said it is working hard to address. The Basra Memorial in Iraq was seen as a key example of such unequal commemoration and past omission that the charity set out to reverse.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Drug abuse eroding

mohallas, and communities; a movement that begins with open, honest dialogue in towns and villages. Mothers and sisters are the moral bedrock of our society and with their help we can win this battle," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Speaking on the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor said that over two dozen drug traffickers have already been identified and they will be tracked down and held accountable. He said in the Jammu division, thousands of peddlers remain under surveillance, and each one will be relentlessly pursued until they are apprehended and brought into custody.

"Security checks have been stepped up around schools, colleges, and other vulnerable areas. I want to make it absolutely clear that those who engage in the grave crime of poisoning the future of our youth through drug trafficking will face the harshest consequences under the law," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also drew attention of police and all enforcement agencies to the fact that drug traffickers and terrorists operate hand in hand and they should be treated as allies in crime.

"Our response should be decisive, thorough, and unyielding. Every route drug smuggler exploit should be dismantled, every financial chain should be dismantled, and every asset stripped away until their networks are completely destroyed," the Lieutenant Governor observed.

The Lieutenant Governor said that for over a decade, Jammu Kashmir has carried the heavy silence surrounding the menace of drug abuse and this historic people's movement was launched to shatter that silence.

"With collective strength we must raise society's voice against the scourge of narcotics. Drugs are a wound in the heart of our society. To heal this wound, we require a people's movement that mobilises the full strength of society to eradicate drugs at their roots. The 'Nasha Mukta J&K' campaign also serves to remind us that among the strongest pillars of society are the rule of law, constitutional values, the ethic of duty, and a spirit of Jan Bhagidari," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor asked the NGOs, social workers and spiritual leaders to join the campaign in large number in cities and villages.

"Social organizations, spiritual leaders, and educators are the frontline guardians of this mission. I firmly believe that through their leadership, hope can be rekindled and society renewed. The full strength of the government and the community stands beside them," the Lieutenant Governor said. (KNO)

Ensure effective

Education Department; Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu; Prof. Nilofer Khan, VC Kashmir University; Prof. Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, VC, IUST; Pragati Kumar, VC SMVDU; Prof. BN Tripathi, VC SKUAST Jammu; Prof. A. Ravinder Nath, VC Central University of Kashmir; Prof. Sanjeev Jain, VC Central University of Jammu; Prof. Jawaid Iqbal, VC BGSBU; Prof. Mohammad Mobin, VC Cluster University Srinagar; Prof. Manoj Singh Gaur, Director IIT Jammu; Prof. Kavi Arya from IIT Bombay; Shobha Bagai, Director, Cluster Innovation Centre Delhi University and other members.

Prof. Dinesh Singh, Vice Chairman, JKHEC emphasized that the core mission must remain the realization of human potential, ensuring that higher education directly fosters societal service and enhances student productivity.

The Council also deliberated on setting up a regular mechanism to ensure cooperation and collaboration between various institutions of Jammu & Kashmir for engendering of Joint Degree Programmes and a common technology-based platform for sharing of practices, ideas and programmes of various institutions; increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), special initiatives such as 'The Riverine College' and the AI Competition, JKHEC budget utilization for 2025-26 and budget allocations for 2026-27.

Vice Chancellors and members of the Council shared their insights on the way forward for the DYD program and further interventions in higher education with the implementation of NEP 2020.

Prof. Sheikh Ajaz Bashir, Director of Colleges, J&K; Dr Seema Naz, Nodal Principal, Government College of Education; Dr Ravinder Kumar Tickoo, Principal, GCW Parade Jammu also attended the meeting. (KNO)

Govt begins exercise

given his assent to the bill.

The law provides a framework for establishing private universities and regulating their functioning, management, and academic standards.

Under the law, the Government must constitute an Expert Committee headed by the Administrative Secretary of Higher Education to examine applications submitted by sponsoring bodies seeking to establish private universities.

The law further stipulates that a sponsoring body can set up a private university only if it has been registered for at least three years, has

education as its primary objective, possesses sound finances, maintains clean credentials, and holds lawful possession of adequate land and facilities. (KNO)

All-weather direct

first time, self-regulating heating cables have been installed to prevent freezing of water pipelines, while 1800W silicon heating pads have been fitted in water tanks. Additional heating systems have been integrated into biotoilets and auxiliary tanks to maintain sanitation functions during extreme cold.

Officials said warm air ducts connected to the air-conditioning system will supply heat to restrooms, while heaters and thermal insulation have been added to ensure proper functioning of vacuum-based toilet systems.

The train is also equipped with a water-draining mechanism to prevent freezing when stalled, and an embedded heating element in the driver's windshield to prevent fogging and ensure visibility during snowfall and fog.

Heating systems have also been installed in the air dryer mechanism to maintain efficient braking, while critical components near water tanks have been shielded with stainless steel covers to prevent damage.

The Vande Bharat train will operate at a speed of up to 160 kmph and is equipped with modern passenger amenities, including fully air-conditioned coaches, automatic doors, LED lighting, CCTV surveillance and an energy-efficient regenerative braking system.

Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Uchit Singhal said, "The operation of this specialised Vande Bharat in the Jammu & Kashmir region fulfils a long-standing demand of both passengers and local residents."

"Our objective is not merely to provide faster travel, but also to ensure all-weather connectivity—even amidst the biting cold of the Valley. This train will serve as a strong and reliable bridge connecting devotees travelling to Vaishno Devi with the Kashmir Valley, while simultaneously boosting tourism in the region," Singhal added. (KNO)

MLAs discuss

connectivity, strengthening of healthcare and educational facilities, and addressing public service delivery issues in their areas.

They also highlighted constituency-specific demands and sought focused attention to ensure balanced and inclusive development.

The Chief Minister gave a patient hearing to the visiting legislators and deputations and assured them that all genuine concerns would be examined on priority.

He reiterated the government's commitment to responsive governance and equitable development across all regions.

Rare Himalayan

the animal to lower altitudes, leading to occasional sightings in human habitations.

They said illegal hunting for the musk pod remains the biggest threat, as it is used in perfumes and traditional medicine and fetches high prices on the black market.

Habitat degradation due to deforestation, livestock grazing and human expansion has further added to the pressure on the species.

Officials urged people to inform the department immediately in case of wildlife sightings to enable timely intervention and prevent conflict. (KNO)

Cloudy weather,

people to avoid heat exposure during peak hours and to stay hydrated by consuming adequate fluids. (KNO)

Youth must be

governance, stating, "The vision of this Chintan Shivir is to ensure individual involvement by bringing every youth voice into the decision-making process."

Highlighting India's demographic strength, he said, "India has the world's most powerful demographic dividend, and to realise the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, it is essential that youth are actively involved in shaping policies that will ultimately benefit them." He further underlined the need for collaborative nation-building, stating, "We must make youth equal partners in achieving the goals of 2047, not just beneficiaries of schemes."

Highlighting institutional mechanisms, Dr Mandaviya said, "Proper nurturing of youth can be achieved through District Youth Officers (DYOs), who can effectively channelise ideas emerging from the grassroots." Calling for robust policymaking processes, he emphasised that stakeholder consultation is essential for effective policy formulation, and transparency must ensure that input directly translates into output without leakages.

Minister of State Raksha Nikhil Khadse noted that the Chintan Shivir provides a platform for meaningful dialogue and action. "This Chintan Shivir offers a platform for fruitful discussions to identify key issues and evolve actionable strategies for the youth of the country," she said, emphasising that youth must be actively involved in the decision-making process at every level and that discussions must flow from the ground level through DYOs to the national

level.

Dr Pallavi Jain Govil, Secretary, Department of Youth Affairs, stated that the present Chintan Shivir builds upon earlier deliberations, providing an opportunity for officers at all levels to present their challenges and innovative ideas, enabling informed and evidence-based decision-making with youth playing a central role in building Viksit Bharat 2047.

Earlier, Nitesh Kumar Mishra, Additional Secretary (Youth Affairs), welcomed the participants and outlined the objectives of the Shivir. Technical sessions on Day 1 included detailed deliberations on the Annual Action Plan 2026-27, focusing on policy alignment, strategic priorities, gap analysis, and implementation frameworks. Presentations highlighted best practices in youth club development, sustainability models, and learnings from previous programme cycles.

Discussions further examined strengthening digital youth engagement through the MY Bharat platform, enhancing grassroots participation, and improving convergence between MY Bharat and the National Service Scheme (NSS), including fund flow mechanisms and programme coordination.

The day concluded with a synthesis of key insights and the formation of thematic groups to take forward focused deliberations in subsequent sessions. The Chintan Shivir will continue over the next two days with emphasis on cross-learning, policy alignment, and action-oriented outcomes, contributing to the broader vision of building an empowered youth ecosystem under Viksit Bharat@2047.

Workers' welfare

number of people covered under ESIC has increased significantly over the years, growing from around 7 crore beneficiaries in 2014 to nearly 14 crore at present.

Highlighting the importance of accessible healthcare, Mandaviya said labourers often face financial challenges in getting proper treatment, which affects their families as well.

He said that several schemes have been introduced to provide medical support ranging from Re 1 to Rs 1 crore.

The Minister also announced that a nursing college will be established at the hospital in the coming time, along with training facilities to strengthen healthcare services in the area.

Referring to sports development, he said the government is working to provide better opportunities for youth and is committed to India's preparations for hosting the 2036 Olympics. (KNO)

Modi says phase-1 polling signals 'wave of change', BJP's victory in Bengal

PTI

Kolkata, Apr 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday claimed that the "wave of change" in West Bengal has become evident in the first phase of polling and asserted that the support shown in "favour of the BJP" sounded the conch shell of its victory in the assembly elections.

Addressing a rally at Panihati under the Dum Dum Lok Sabha constituency in North 24 Parganas, Modi alleged that the ruling TMC had "crushed the temple of democracy" in Bengal through "dictatorship", but said that the people of the state began to "reconstruct" it through their mandate.

"The wave of change that had been visible in Bengal for a long time — yesterday's first phase of voting has put its seal on it. The support shown yesterday in favour of the BJP has sounded the conch shell of its victory," he said.

Nearly 92 per cent of the 3.60 crore electors turned up to vote in the first phase of the West



Bengal assembly polls on Thursday.

"In Bengal, where the TMC had crushed the temple of democracy with its dictatorship, people have started reconstructing the temple of democracy. Now, in the second phase, you have to unfurl the victory flag over this temple," the Prime Minister said.

He claimed that the TMC was "extremely rattled" after the first phase of polling and alleged that the ruling party had mobilised its "goons" through the night. The Prime Minister

also alleged that after the poll results on May 4, "TMC's goons" will have no place to hide.

"The first phase of polling had marked the end of the TMC's 'maha jungle raj'," he claimed.

Stepping up his attack on the ruling party over women's safety, Modi described the TMC as an "anti-women party" and said the BJP believed in a "women-led development model".

Referring to women candidates fielded by the BJP, Modi said the party had given representation

to those who had suffered injustice.

"This mother helped her daughter become a doctor. But that daughter was taken away from her by the TMC. We have made that mother a candidate," Modi said while referring to the party's Panihati candidate, the mother of the RG Kar rape-murder victim.

"The BJP has also given an opportunity to the victim of Sandeshkhali to lead. When the women of Bengal ask for justice, the TMC tells them not to step out of their homes," Modi alleged.

BJP says AAP in 'complete disarray' after 7 RS members announce switch

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 24: The BJP Friday said the AAP is in "complete disarray" and has become a "den of corruption" after seven of its Rajya Sabha members, including Raghav Chadha and Sandeep Pathak, quit and announced they are joining the BJP.

In a post on X, BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said, "No one believes in the corrupt AAP. The party, which started by claiming to be a party with a difference, has become a den of corruption."

BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said on X, "The Aam Aadmi Party is in complete disarray. The collapse is no longer speculation; it is unfolding in real time."

Chadha and Pathak on Friday announced that they are joining the BJP along with five other MPs of the party.

Addressing a press conference here, Chadha said that seven out of 10 Rajya Sabha members of AAP are set to merge with the BJP.

"As per the Constitution, two-thirds of the total MPs of a party can merge with another party. We have submitted a letter to Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan in this regard today, along with all the required documents," he told reporters.

Chadha said the other MPs who are joining the BJP are Harbhajan Singh, Rajendra Gupta, Vikram Sahni, Swati Maliwal and Ashok Mittal. Pathak and Mittal were present with him at the press conference.

Right to speedy trial cannot be exercised to grant bail in NDPS case: SC

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 24: The Supreme Court on Friday said right to speedy trial is a precious constitutional right but it cannot be exercised to grant bail in matters governed by special enactment such as the NDPS Act, particularly where the recovery is of commercial quantity.

A bench of justices Sanjay Karol and Augustine George Masih made the observation while setting aside bail to two individuals by the Punjab and Haryana High Court in a case involving recovery of commercial quantity of heroin.

"The right to speedy trial, rooted in Article 21 of the Constitution, is undoubtedly a precious Constitutional right. That said, in matters governed by a special enactment such as the NDPS Act, particularly where the recovery is of commercial quantity, the said right under Article 21 must be exercised within the framework of Section 37 and cannot be pressed into service solely on the ground of delay to override it."

"The constitutional right under Article 21 and the special provision of law under Section 37, NDPS Act are to be read harmoniously and not placed in opposition to each other. The High Court, by failing to record its satisfaction on the twin conditions under Section 37, has in this court's view, committed an error," the bench said.

The top court said the impugned high court order reflects a lack of adequate consideration of the record as the accused himself admitted that "apart from the present case one more case FIR is there against him". "The High Court, however, has



recorded that the respondent is 'not involved in any other case', and has expressly counted that recording among the considerations weighing in favour of the grant of bail.

"The recording of the High Court and the admission by the respondent are irreconcilable. A Court while considering the prayer for bail under a special statute and attracting Section 37 of the NDPS Act could not have granted relief on grounds directly at odds with the admissions made by the respondent in the very petition before it. The said order being contrary to facts is flawed that speaks for itself as it appears that this fact was not brought to the notice of the High Court," the bench said.

The apex court said the impugned high court order is conspicuously silent on the fact that the petition before the high court was the second petition under Section 483 of the BNSS, the first being dismissed as withdrawn.

"A Court entertaining a successive bail petition under a special statute is bound to refer to the fate of the earlier petition and to record what change in circumstances justifies a fresh consideration," it said while setting aside the high court order and directing the accused to surrender within a week.

President of UNGA's 80th session to visit India on Apr 28

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 24: President of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly, Annalena Baerbock, is scheduled to visit India on April 28, during which she will discuss key multilateral issues of mutual interest with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, the MEA announced on Friday.

As part of her programme, she will also pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat.

Baerbock will also have an interactive session with representatives from the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) on governance and regulation of artificial intelligence, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

The former German foreign minister was elected the president of the General Assembly's 80th session in June last year.

Soon after her election to the post, the UN said in a statement that she assumes the role at a challenging time, with ongoing conflicts, faltering development goals, mounting financial pressures and upcoming selection of the next secretary-general.

SEBI proposes new net worth framework for brokers linked to client base and funds

IANS

Mumbai, April 24 The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Friday proposed a revised framework for calculating the net worth requirement of stock brokers, seeking to align capital norms more closely with the scale and risk profile of their operations.

In a consultation paper, the regulator said the existing methodology — which ties net worth to 10 per cent of the average daily client cash balances retained by brokers — has lost relevance following the implementation of the upstreaming framework. Under this system, most client funds are now transferred to clearing corporations, leaving minimal balances with brokers. To address this shift, SEBI has suggested a new approach that considers both the volume of client funds handled and the number of active clients serviced by a broker. The regulator emphasised that net worth serves as a "second line of defence" after margins and should be strong enough to absorb risks that are not covered through margin requirements.

Under the proposed structure, the variable net worth component would be calculated using a combination of parameters. These include 10 per cent of the average credit balance of all clients over the preceding six months, along with additional capital requirements linked to the number of active direct clients.

Brokers with more than 10,000 and up to 50,000 clients would need to maintain around Rs 50 lakh, with an incremental Rs 50 lakh required for every additional 50,000 clients or part thereof.

Markets slump for third day on surging oil prices, massive selling in IT stocks

Sensex drops 1,000 points

Mumbai, Apr 24: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled over 1 per cent on Friday, falling for the third consecutive day, as a sharp rally in crude prices and massive selling in IT counters weighed heavily on investors' sentiment.

Unabated foreign fund outflows, a negative trend in global markets amid prolonged conflict and continued disruption in the Strait of Hormuz added to the gloom.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 999.79 points, or 1.29 per cent, to settle at 76,664.21. During the day, it plunged 1,260.13 points or 1.62 per cent to 76,403.87.

The wider gauge NSE Nifty slumped 275.10 points, or 1.14 per cent, to end at 23,897.95.

"Indian equity markets extended their decline for a third consecutive session, as renewed risk-off sentiment weighed on investor confidence. Ongoing tensions in the Middle East, coupled with



persistent weakness in the IT sector, continued to pressure an already fragile market backdrop.

"Volatility also increased, with the India VIX rising 6 per cent, reflecting heightened fear and uncertainty amid the prolonged conflict and continued disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, with no meaningful signs of de-escalation," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

From the Sensex constituents, Infosys dived 7.09 per cent after its revenue growth forecast for

FY27 came in lower than market expectations. On the other hand, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Sun Pharma, Asian Paints and ICICI Bank were also among the major laggards.

Trent, Bajaj Finance, State Bank of India, HDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the winners. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 2.17 per cent higher at USD 107.3 per barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,254.71 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

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

Markets in Europe were trading lower in afternoon trade. US markets ended lower on Thursday.

"The Indian equity market extended its profit-booking streak, pressured by heightening geopolitical tensions in West Asia, a sharp rally in crude oil prices, and a weakening rupee. IT stocks led the decline following disappointing quarterly earnings, while selling pressure was broad-based across sectors. FIIs returned to net selling again after a brief spell of inflows," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

On Thursday, the Sensex tumbled 852.49 points or 1.09 per cent to settle at 77,664. The Nifty dropped 205.05 points or 0.84 per cent to end at 24,173.05.

Gold, silver drop for 3rd day on strengthening of US dollar

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 24: Precious metal prices extended losses for the third straight session in the national capital on Friday, with gold declining Rs 200 and silver plunging Rs 3,000 amid a firm US dollar and elevated global uncertainty.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity slipped Rs 200 to Rs 1,55,900 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Thursday's closing level of Rs 1,56,100 per 10 grams.

Silver also dropped Rs 3,000 to Rs 2,47,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). The metal had settled at Rs 2,50,000 per kg in the previous market session.

"Gold continued to face pressure, trading near a two-week low with a negative bias as ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia kept market sentiment cautious," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

The standoff in the Strait of Hormuz has kept energy prices elevated, reinforcing inflation concerns and limiting the upside in gold, he added.

"A firm dollar and steady US Treasury bond yields have added to further the downside pressure. The

dollar index is on track for its first weekly gain after three consecutive declines, reducing the appeal of non-yielding assets like gold," Gandhi said.

In the international markets, spot gold rose marginally to USD 4,708.17 per ounce, while silver gained nearly 1 per cent to USD 75.96 per ounce.

Price action continues to be driven by developments in West Asia, particularly tensions involving Iran, Israel, and the US presence in the Strait of Hormuz, which have kept uncertainty elevated, Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

With conflicting signals and no clear resolution, gold is likely to remain volatile and driven by news flow, he added.

Kaynat Chainwala, AVP Commodity Research, Kotak Securities, said April's preliminary University of Michigan inflation expectations surged to 4.8 per cent, marking the sharpest monthly increase since April 2025.

The final reading due later in the day will be a crucial input ahead of the April 28-29 Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) decision, which is expected to provide further direction on monetary policy path and near-term trajectory for bullion prices, she added.

India, US make positive progress in trade talks

Both sides to remain engaged

PTI

New Delhi, Apr 24: India and the US made positive progress during three-day trade talks in Washington this week, with both sides agreeing to remain engaged to sustain the momentum going forward, the government said on Friday.

About a dozen officers from India were in Washington during April 20-22 to hold discussions with the US authorities on finalising the details of the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA).

The talks deliberated on issues including market access, non-tariff measures, technical barriers to trade, customs and trade facilitation, investment promotion, economic security alignment and digital trade, the commerce ministry said in a statement.

"The meetings were conducted in a constructive and positive spirit, with meaningful and forward-looking discussions enabling progress on key matters. Both sides agreed to remain engaged to maintain this momentum as they move forward," it said.

As the tariff landscape has changed in the US, both sides are relooking at the framework of the agreement, the text of which was released on February 7.

US Trade Representative Jamie Greer has said India is a "tough nut to crack".

Following the decision of the US Supreme Court against the sweeping tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump on a number of countries, the Trump administration imposed a 10 per cent tariff on all countries from February 24 for 150 days.

According to that framework, the US had agreed to reduce tariffs on India to 18 per cent, from 50 per cent. It had removed the 25 per cent tariffs on Indian goods for buying Russian oil and was to cut the remaining 25 per cent to 18 per cent under the pact. But on February 20, the US Supreme Court ruled against Trump's reciprocal tariffs which were imposed under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA).

After that, the President announced the imposition of 10 per cent tariffs on all countries for 150 days, starting February 24.

Under the agreed framework, India proposed to eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of



US food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains (DDGs), feed sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products.

India had also expressed its intentions to purchase USD 500 billion of US energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products, and coking coal over the next five years.

The meeting was also important as when India finalised the deal, it enjoyed a comparative advantage over its competitor countries. Now, with all US trading partners facing a uniform 10 per cent tariff, the pact requires recalibration.

So the agreement will have to be recalibrated, and redrafted, a government source had said.

As the circumstances have changed, every country is engaging with the US to see what is going to be the nature of their trade agreements with America.

Further, the US Trade Representative (USTR) in March had launched two unilateral investigations against a number of countries including India.

India has strongly rejected allegations made by the US Trade Representative in those two investigations under its Section 301 of trade law and has requested to terminate the probes as the initiation notice has failed to provide cogent rationale to substantiate the claims.

China has overtaken the US to emerge as India's largest trading partner in 2025-26. The US was India's largest trading partner for four consecutive years till 2024-25.

The country's outbound shipments to the US grew marginally 0.92 per cent to USD 87.3 billion during the last fiscal year, while imports increased 15.95 per cent to USD 52.9 billion. The trade surplus declined to USD 34.4 billion in 2025-26 from USD 40.89 billion in 2024-25.

Lebanon-Israel ceasefire extended by 3 weeks after Oval Office meeting

REUTERS

Washington/Beirut/Jerusalem, Apr 24: Lebanon and Israel extended their ceasefire for three weeks after a high-level meeting at the White House, US President Donald Trump said on Thursday. Trump hosted Israel's ambassador to Washington Yechiel Leiter and Lebanese ambassador to the US Nada Moawad in the Oval Office for a second round of US-facilitated talks, a day after Israeli strikes killed at least five people including a journalist.

"The Meeting went very well! The United States is going to work with Lebanon in order to help it protect itself from Hezbollah," Trump wrote on Truth Social. Hezbollah, the Iran-aligned armed group that is fighting Israel, was not present at the talks. It says it has "the right to resist" occupying forces. Trump added that he looked forward to hosting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Lebanese President Joseph Aoun in the near future.

Trump also spoke to reporters in the Oval Office alongside the participants in the meeting, saying he hoped the leaders would meet during the three-week cessation of hostilities. He said there was "a great chance" the two countries would reach a peace agreement this year.

Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee and US Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa also attended the meeting.

The ceasefire, reached after talks between the two nations' ambassadors to Washington last week, was set to expire



on Sunday. It has yielded a significant reduction in violence, but attacks have continued in southern Lebanon, where Israeli troops have seized a self-declared buffer zone.

"Make Lebanon great again" Ambassador Moawad, who went into the meeting seeking an extension of the ceasefire, thanked Trump for hosting the talks. "I think with your help, with your support, we can make Lebanon great again," she said.

A Lebanese official earlier said Beirut would push for an Israeli withdrawal, the return of Lebanese detained in Israel and a delineation of the land border in a next phase of negotiations. Israel has sought to make common cause with Lebanon's government over Hezbollah, which Beirut has been seeking to disarm peacefully for the past year.

Asked how the US would help Lebanon to fight Hezbollah, Trump did not provide details but said the US had "a great relationship with Lebanon." Trump said Israel had to be able to defend itself against attacks from Hezbollah. Trump

and her employer, Al-Akhbar newspaper.

Israel's military said on Wednesday it was reviewing an incident in which it had received reports that two journalists were wounded by strikes it said were aimed at vehicles departing a military structure used by Hezbollah. It said Israel does not target journalists.

Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah said the group wanted the ceasefire to continue but "on the basis of full compliance by the Israeli enemy." At a televised press conference, he reiterated Hezbollah's objections to the face-to-face talks and urged the government to cancel all forms of direct contact with Israel. Hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel reignited on March 2, when the group opened fire in support of Iran in the regional war. The ceasefire in Lebanon emerged separately from Washington's efforts to resolve its conflict with Tehran, though Iran had called for Lebanon to be included in any broader truce. Hezbollah said it carried out four operations in south Lebanon on Wednesday in response to Israeli strikes.

Nearly 2,500 people have been killed in Lebanon since Israel went on the offensive following Hezbollah's March 2 attack, according to Lebanese authorities.

Israel is occupying a belt of the south that extends 5 to 10 km (3 to 6 miles) into Lebanon, saying it aims to shield northern Israel from attacks by Hezbollah, which has fired hundreds of rockets during the war.

Israel's military reiterated a warning to residents of south Lebanon not to cross into the area.

US Def Secy Hegseth calls war in Iran gift to world

AP

Washington, Apr 24: Speaking to reporters on Friday at the Pentagon, Hegseth said the US blockade of Iranian shipping will continue "as long as it takes" to accomplish America's "bold and dangerous" mission to end Iran's threat to global security.

US officials say that so far, the blockade has turned back 34 ships, but ship-tracking data shows Iran has still been able to move some of its sanctioned oil. Lloyd's List Intelligence said "a steady flow of shadow fleet traffic" has passed in and out of the Persian Gulf, including 11 tankers with Iranian cargo that have left the Gulf of Oman outside the strait since April 13.

The maritime intelligence firm Windward said this week that Iranian traffic continues to flow "via deception."

Iranians are able to evade the blockade by faking



tracking data and by travelling through Pakistani territorial waters.

Child vaccine catch-up drive on course to hit target: UN



AFP

Geneva, Apr 24: The United Nations on Friday said a three-year effort to immunize children who missed routine vaccinations due to the Covid-19 crisis was on course to reach the 21 million target.

The pandemic, which swept around the world in 2020, severely strained health systems and disrupted vaccination campaigns, resulting in a resurgence of infectious diseases such as measles and polio.

The UN's World Health Organization and the UN children's agency UNICEF, plus Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance said in a joint statement that the so-called Big Catch-Up campaign "is on track to meet its target of catching up 21 million children."

The vaccine drive concluded in March.

While final data is still being compiled, by the end of December 2025, the campaign had reached an estimated 18.3 million children aged one to five across 36

countries in Africa and Asia with more than 100 million doses of life-saving vaccines.

Of those children reached, an estimated 12.3 million had never received a vaccine dose before, while 15 million had never previously received a measles vaccine.

Besides reaching those children, the agencies said the drive had also improved immunization programs, making them better equipped to identify older children who were not on the system, having missed earlier doses.

"By protecting children who missed out on vaccinations because of disruptions to health services caused by Covid-19, the Big Catch-Up has helped to undo one of the pandemic's major negative consequences," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Gebreyesus.

Anti-vaccine content

But not all is rosy. Vaccines are facing a tide of misinformation and disinformation, the agencies said, while cuts in foreign aid spending were also

taking their toll.

The statement said chronic gaps in routine immunization were "plain to see," with measles outbreaks rising in every region with around 11 million cases in 2024.

The surge is compounded by "declining vaccine confidence in some previously high-coverage communities."

The WHO's vaccines director Kate O'Brien told reporters that while the person parents trusted most on vaccination remained the health worker they interact with, "what is really troubling and a very high concern to all of us is that there has been evermore a politicization of vaccines and of health."

Gavi chief executive Sania Nishitar added that "we are up against a social media engine which has an incentive to promote disinformation, and I think that needs to be strategically tackled."

"The social media algorithms promote hate, disinformation and lies. Put a good piece of information out there and you will have no traction," she said.

Ephrem Lemango, global chief of immunization at UNICEF, said social media algorithms "tend to reward outrage over accuracy, and there is so much anti-vaccine content" that it has its own "economy behind it."

"So we do need better content that is disseminated through these platforms," he told a press conference.

The continued decline of foreign aid spending and sharp funding cuts to global health "have seriously affected delivery of immunization services. This will likely reverse hard-earned progress," he added.

'China acquired capacity to build 50 nuclear power reactors simultaneously'

PTI

Beijing, Apr 24: China can build up to 50 nuclear reactors simultaneously, the country's atomic authority has said as Beijing gears up to rapidly expand the nuclear power sector to reduce dependence on fossil fuels amid the US-Iran war.

China has the ability to run dozens of nuclear projects concurrently spanning the full project life cycle — from design to construction — according to a latest report released this week by the country's Nuclear Energy Association.

"China's nuclear technology

capabilities have moved from 'following' to 'keeping pace', and in some areas to 'leading,'" the report said.

China's total installed nuclear power capacity has reached 125 million kilowatts (KW), ranking first globally, state-run CCTV said, quoting the China Nuclear Energy Association (CNEA) report.

China currently operates 60 commercial nuclear reactors, with 36 under construction — representing over half of global nuclear construction, according to the report.

Another 16 units have been approved and await

construction, according to the report.

By 2040, China is projected to have 200 GW of installed capacity, Yang Changli, rotating chairman of the CNEA, told domestic media outlet chinanews.com.cn.

Beijing has moved to rapidly build up its nuclear power sector in recent years as part of a wider effort to cut carbon emissions and reduce the nation's reliance on fossil fuels, which gained urgency following the ongoing US-Israel war on Iran.

China aims to become a "strong country" in nuclear power by 2030, surpassing the

United States in terms of total installed nuclear capacity and emerging as the world's largest nuclear power producer by scale, according to the CNEA.

Wang Shoujun, head of the Chinese Nuclear Society, said China's nuclear industry has entered a fast track of high-quality development in recent years, with enhanced capabilities in nuclear technology innovation, including third- and fourth-generation nuclear power technologies, small modular reactors, and advanced nuclear fuel cycles, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Sahin Tendulkar celebrates 53rd birthday with fans at home



PTI

Mumbai, Apr 24: Legendary Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar celebrated his 53rd birthday here on Friday in presence of fans across age groups at his residence with his wife Anjali in company.

The Little Master cut the birthday cake amid cheering fans who had gathered here this morning at his residence. Among them was a young girl wearing a t-shirt that had Tendulkar's picture and the batting legend took her in his lap.

Earlier in the day, Tendulkar posted a picture on social media with his mother and wife as well as his pet dog in frame. "Perfect start to my day with Aai, Anjali and the trouble maker! What more could a man ask for?" he wrote.

Former India cricketer Harbhajan Singh, who was present at a Legends Club event on the occasion of Tendulkar's birthday told PTI, "I wish my brother a very happy birthday. I wish him a lot of love and respect."

"I pray that he stays healthy. I pray that he continues to inspire us. I wish him a lot of happiness and love," Harbhajan said.

Kumble, Harbhajan hail Samson's hundred

Cite context & game awareness



PTI

Chennai, Apr 24: Spin legends Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh hailed Sanju Samson's hundred against Mumbai Indians here as one of the finest in terms of game awareness and context, as Chennai Super Kings returned to winning ways in the ongoing IPL.

Samson scored his second century of the 2026 IPL season on Thursday, smashing an unbeaten 101 off 54 balls at Wankhede Stadium.

Speaking on Star Sports, Kumble stressed on the knock's impact on CSK who are trying to climb up the points table after a string of poor outings. "CSK's success has often been built on strong starts from their openers, and in the last few seasons, that hasn't been consistent. Sanju Samson has

stepped up in that context, two unbeaten hundreds in just seven matches, and has been instrumental in carrying the team through," the great leg-spinner observed.

"It's similar to the role Jos Buttler played during Rajasthan's run to the final, and you can clearly see that influence in the way Sanju has evolved his game."

Former India off-spinner Harbhajan described the century as one of the finest knocks from the blade of Samson. "Sanju Samson stood out because of his game awareness. A lot of players have talent, but very few understand how to pace an innings in different situations. He recognised the importance of batting till the end, especially with a young side around him," Harbhajan said.

Movie Watchlist

Saturday 25th April

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Dhurandhar: The Revenge (A) Hindi - 11:05 AM, 06:15 PM</p> | <p>BHOOTH BANGLA (U/A16+) HINDI - 10:30 AM HINDI ATMOS - 12:00 PM, 03:15 PM, 06:30 PM</p> |
| <p>LEE CRONIN'S THE MUMMY (A) ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES 07:05 PM</p> | <p>GINNY WEDSS SUNNY 2 (U/A16+) Hindi - 03:30 PM</p> |
| <p>MICHAEL (U/A 13+) ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES 01:45 PM, 04:25 PM</p> | |