



NASHA MUKHT J&K ABHIYAN

Our neighbouring country pushing narcotics into J&K to harm youth, sponsor terrorism: LG Sinha

» Leads 2-km Padyatra against drug abuse, narco-terrorism in Srinagar

» Reiterates pledge to dismantle drug cartels

» Says both terrorists, drug traffickers seek to destroy peace

» 'Let's envision UT where no child is lost to drugs'

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, May 03: Reiterating his resolve to dismantle drug cartels in the Union Territory, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Sunday said that our neighbouring country is pushing narcotics into J&K to harm youth and sponsor terrorism.

Addressing the launch of a major campaign against drug abuse and narco-terrorism at TRC Football Ground here, before leading a 2-KMs Padyatra, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Our neighbouring country, known as the world's foremost incubator of terrorism is pushing drugs to harm our youth and sponsor terrorism."

He said drug money fuels terrorism and radicalization. LG Sinha said that Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan is advancing on three fronts- dismantling supply chains, spreading awareness at the grassroots, and rehabilitating addicts with dignity and care.

"It is a grave threat to internal security. Both terrorists and drug traffickers seek



to fracture unity, corrode integrity, and destroy peace, while draining the strength of our youth to strike at Jammu Kashmir's future. We have adopted 360-degree approach for cracking down on drug peddlers, rehabilitating addicts, training police, raising awareness, and mobilizing grassroots participation," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Her said, "In the war against drug abuse and narco-terrorism, every step matters. Every effort counts. Every contribution brings victory closer. Together, let us envision a Jammu Kashmir where no child is lost to drugs, no family is broken by addiction, no community suffers under traffickers, and every citizen thrives in health and strength."

"This is the vision we pursue, the dream we must fulfil, and the legacy we owe future generations. It is about Jammu Kashmir's destiny, the society we aspire to build, the values we uphold, and the lives we safeguard. Today, let us pledge that we will not rest until Jammu Kashmir is completely drug-free," the Lieutenant Governor said. LG Sinha urged

people from all walks of life to commit themselves wholeheartedly to the fight against substance abuse. "The battle against substance abuse is being fought in our homes and the pledge we made today is not just a personal vow. It is cry of every mother who has seen her child consumed by addiction, and solemn commitment of every father who

has watched dreams collapse under weight of drug abuse. It is also promise of every teacher who has witnessed talent and potential fade into silence. Determination to uproot drugs is not only a declaration from administration but it is collective resolve of people, who, after enduring decades of suffering, have risen to say: enough is enough."

He said, "Active participation of the people is unshakable force capable of defeating the enemies' assault through narco-terrorism. Drug traffickers and their networks have targeted our youth. We have taken a solemn oath that we will never allow them to succeed," the Lieutenant Governor said.

LG Sinha emphasised that the intervention from the society is most significant. He said that we must involve elders, spiritual leaders and teachers to guide youth on the right path. Their vigilance can save lives and serve as powerful weapons against addiction, he said.

"I also want to tell our youth that drugs are not "cool" but they are chains that steal your freedom. Your energy belongs to sports fields, skill platforms, and the building of a brighter future," the Lieutenant Governor said.

"Under a new SoP, we are taking stringent action. Between April 11 and May 2, the Jammu and Kashmir divisions together recorded 481 FIRs in just 21 | More on P6

NMJKA: LG calls for focused, time-bound strategy in next 78 days

KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 03: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday chaired a high-level meeting at Lok Bhavan to review the progress of the ongoing Nasha Mukht Jammu Kashmir Abhiyan and assessed the district-wise action plans aimed at eliminating drug abuse and narco-terrorism.

The meeting was attended by Atal Dullo, Chief Secretary; Nalin Prabhat, DGP; Chandraker Bharti, Principal Secretary Home Department; S.J.M. Gillani, Spl DG Coordination PHQ; Nitish Kumar, ADGP, CID; Dr. Mandeep K Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Sujit Kumar, IGP Security; Sarmad Hafeez, Commissioner/Secretary, Social Welfare Department; Ram Niwas Sharma, Commissioner/Secretary School Education Department; Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; VK Birdi, IGP Kashmir; senior officials of civil and police administration, Deputy Commissioners and SSPs from Kashmir Division.

Reviewing the progress, the Lieutenant Governor



underscored the need for a focused, time-bound and result-oriented strategy by all district administrations in the next 78-days. He directed the officers to ensure effective implementation of the action at all levels with measurable outcomes in curbing drug abuse and dismantling narcotics networks.

The Lieutenant Governor called for intensified grassroots-level engagement at the Panchayat and Ward levels. He emphasised active participation of community stakeholders, including religious leaders, educationists, traders, youth groups, and social and political activists, to transform the campaign into a sustained mass movement. | More on P6

'Jan Andolan': Thousands join LG-led anti-drug Padyatra in Srinagar

Civil society members, religious clerics, students attend in large numbers | Pledge, cultural outreach, signature drive mark impactful program

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, May 03: As part of strong and unified show of public resolve, thousands of people on Sunday participated in a mega anti-drug Padyatra led by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha in Srinagar, with the campaign taking the shape of "Jan Andolan (mass movement)" across the Valley.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) people from all walks of life, including civil society members, religious clerics, students, traders, youth volunteers, sportsmen and government officials joined the march in large numbers, reflecting a shared determination to fight the growing drug menace.

"This is not just a government programme anymore and it has become a people's responsibility. We must stand together to save our youth," said Gulzar Ahmad.

The event began at TRC Football Stadium with the arrival of the Lieutenant Governor. The proceedings opened with the National



Song and National Anthem, followed by a welcome address by the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, who highlighted the importance of collective action in tackling drug abuse.

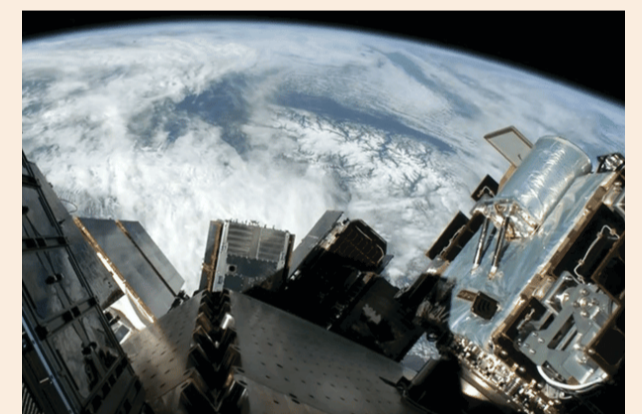
An anti-drug awareness programme was screened, showcasing the serious social, psychological and economic consequences of substance abuse. Moreover, this was followed by a cultural programme in which artists depicted the harmful impact of drugs on individuals and families, drawing strong engagement from

the audience. The Lieutenant Governor then released balloons as a symbolic gesture, representing hope and a collective commitment towards building a drug-free society.

A highlight of the programme was the anti-drug pledge. "Thousands of participants raised their hands and took a pledge to work actively towards eradicating drug abuse from the society."

Addressing the gathering, LG Sinha, according to KNO, reiterated the administration's zero-tolerance | More on P6

Indian startup's 'Drishti' satellite launched aboard SpaceX rocket



PTI

New Delhi, May 03: Bengaluru-based space start-up GalaxEye's Mission Drishti satellite was launched on Sunday aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket from California.

Mission Drishti is the world's first OptoSAR satellite, integrating electro-optical (EO) and synthetic aperture radar (SAR) sensors into a single operational platform, according to the company.

While EO sensors capture high-resolution images during sunlight and clear skies, SAR sensors provide

all-weather and all-time images, using radar pulses.

In a statement, Suyash Singh, founder and CEO of GalaxEye, said, "With the satellite (Mission Drishti) now successfully in orbit, our immediate focus is on completing its commissioning. As we move through this phase, we are already witnessing strong global interest in the differentiated datasets enabled by our OptoSAR payload."

The satellite will help address long-standing limitations of conventional systems and enable more reliable and consistent data acquisition | More on P6

8,925 passengers travel in Jammu-Srinagar Vande Bharat in two days

KT News Desk

Jammu, May 03: The Jammu-Srinagar Vande Bharat Express has received an enthusiastic response, with over 8,900 passengers travelling on the route in the first two days of operations, officials said on Sunday, as passengers pay 730 (excluding catering charges) for the journey—a fraction of airfares ranging from 4,000 to 6,000 between the two cities.

According to railway officials, around 3,925 passengers travelled on the train on its inaugural day, while the number crossed 5,000 on the second day of operations on May 3. The positive response is being seen as a boost to rail connectivity on the Jammu-Srinagar route, with the service offering



a cheaper and convenient alternative to air travel.

The semi-high-speed train covers the distance between

Jammu and Srinagar in about four hours and 45 minutes, offering a faster and more convenient alternative to road travel.

"The service has become the preferred choice for thousands of commuters, tourists, and local residents," officials said.

The train's modern amenities, including GPS-based passenger information systems and upgraded interiors, have added to its appeal. To enhance the travel experience, IRCTC has introduced a special vegetarian Kashmiri menu on the route. "Passengers can opt out of meals at the time of booking, with catering charges deducted from the fare. Food can also be purchased onboard, subject to availability," officials added.

Officials expressed confidence that occupancy would soon touch full capacity, citing growing demand for the service. They said the Vande Bharat Express has significantly improved connectivity on the Jammu-Srinagar corridor and is expected to provide a boost to tourism and | More on P6

Testament to youth's passion for innovation: PM Modi

KT News Desk

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday congratulated the founders and the entire team of GalaxEye on the successful launch of Mission Drishti, stating that the launch of the world's first OptoSAR satellite and the largest privately-built satellite | More on P6

Will boost India's Earth observation capabilities: Amit Shah

PTI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday congratulated young scientists and engineers at GalaxEye for building Mission Drishti, described as the world's first OptoSAR satellite combining | More on P6

Not merely policies, but true strength of society lies in intent of its people: Satish Sharma

Calls for compassionate society at Unsung Everyday Heroes Awards 2026

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MAY 3: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Youth Services & Sports, Information Technology, and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma, on Sunday lauded the spirit of selfless services and called for a collective commitment towards building a compassionate and resilient society.

He was speaking at the Unsung Everyday Heroes Awards 2026 (Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh), organised by 'The Art of Living' organisation, which seeks to recognise and celebrate the individuals and institutions making silent yet impactful contributions to society. The initiative also marks the beginning of an annual tradition aimed at honouring the grassroots change makers and nurturing a culture of service and compassion.

The event, as per an official statement, was attended by



MLA Chenani Balwant Singh Mankotia, State Election Commissioner Shantmanu along with distinguished guests, social workers and awardees from across the region.

The Minister emphasized that the true strength of a society lies not merely in policies and programmes but in the values and intent of its people. "No government scheme alone can transform a society; real change begins

with a transformation of the human heart," he said.

Highlighting the growing challenge of drug abuse among youth, Satish Sharma termed it one of the gravest threats facing Jammu and Kashmir. He stressed that enforcement alone cannot curb the menace and underscored the need for value-based interventions, awareness and community participation. "A young person with purpose does not seek

escape. The real solution lies in restoring the confidence, direction and inner strength among our youth," he added.

The Minister appreciated the efforts of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and The Art of Living for their sustained work in promoting mental well-being, social harmony and human values globally. He said that initiatives such as youth programmes, wellness practices and community

outreach play a vital role in guiding young minds towards positivity and resilience.

Speaking on the essence of selflessness, he observed that true service does not seek recognition but is driven by compassion and duty. In an age increasingly shaped by the individualism and social media validation, he said, quiet acts of service carry even greater significance.

Reiterating the government's commitment, Satish Sharma said that empowering youth, promoting social responsibility and fostering innovation-led development, particularly in IT, sports and community welfare, remain key priorities. He added that such platforms inspire the citizens, especially the younger generation, to contribute meaningfully to the society.

The ceremony concluded with the felicitation of several unsung heroes whose dedication and service continue to inspire communities across Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

JMC launches intensive pond cleaning drive in Bantalab



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MAY 03: Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) Sunday organized a comprehensive sanitation drive at the pond located in Ward No. 63, Gurah Brahmana, Bantalab.

The initiative forms part of JMC's sustained campaign to preserve, restore and maintain water bodies across the city, ensuring their long-term ecological health and utility.

The drive, as per an official statement, was carried out under the leadership of MLA Jammu North Sham Lal Sharma and Commissioner, JMC Dr. Devansh Yadav.

The campaign witnessed active participation from Disha NGO, local residents, volunteers and municipal staff, highlighting a growing sense of civic responsibility and collective ownership among the public.

During the drive, accumulated waste, silt and debris were cleared from the pond and its surrounding areas.

The initiative aimed not only at immediate cleaning but also at sensitizing citizens about the importance of protecting water bodies from pollution and neglect.

The JMC reiterated that such drives are part of a larger, continuous effort to rejuvenate urban water resources and improve environmental conditions across Jammu city.

Addressing the gathering, Sham Lal Sharma emphasized that water bodies are vital ecological assets that require consistent care and protection. He noted that unchecked pollution and negligence can severely impact these resources and therefore, community participation is indispensable. To ensure sustained monitoring and upkeep, he announced that a local committee would be constituted in coordination with residents to oversee sanitation efforts and prevent future contamination.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Devansh Yadav underscored that raising public awareness is central to the success of such initiatives. He appealed to citizens to refrain from disposing of garbage, plastics and other waste materials into ponds, drains and open spaces. He further urged residents to maintain cleanliness in their localities and adopt responsible waste management practices in their daily lives. The Commissioner stressed

that behavioral change at the grassroots level is key to achieving long-term environmental sustainability. He called upon citizens to take ownership of their surroundings and actively contribute towards maintaining a clean and healthy urban environment. Clean surroundings not only enhance the quality of life but also play a crucial role in safeguarding public health and natural resources.

Local residents welcomed the initiative and expressed their support for continued cleanliness and conservation efforts. The active involvement of the community served as a testament to the effectiveness of awareness-driven campaigns in encouraging public participation.

The Jammu Municipal Corporation reiterated that this sanitation drive is part of its broader strategy to strengthen civic engagement and promote citizen-led initiatives. Through continuous awareness campaigns, field-level interventions and collaborative efforts with the public, JMC aims to build a cleaner, greener and more sustainable Jammu.

Pedal to Peak

190 KM Baisakhi Pinnacle Cycling Challenge promotes Tourism, Fitness in Baderwah

KT NEWS DESK

BHADERWAH, MAY 03: In an inspiring initiative to promote tourism and fitness, the Baderwah Development Authority (BDA) successfully organized the "Baisakhi Pinnacle Challenge - Pedal to the Peak," a 190 km long-distance cycling ride from Jammu to the scenic valley of Baderwah.

As many as 35 cyclists, as per an official statement, from different regions including Jammu, Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand participated in the event, showcasing unity and enthusiasm for adventure tourism.

The cyclists were flagged off from M.A Stadium, Jammu and completed their journey at the picturesque Tourist Reception Centre (TRC) in Baderwah.

Upon their arrival, the participants received a warm and

enthusiastic welcome from ADC Sunil Kumar Bhutyal; CEO BDA Sanjeev Sharma; Tehsildar Kamalpreet Singh; AO BDA Manmit Ganjoo and Dr. Ifthker.

The primary aim of the cycling challenge was to highlight Baderwah as an emerging tourist destination while also spreading awareness about important national campaigns like "Nasha Mukh Bharat" and "Fit India." The event emphasized the importance of a healthy lifestyle and a drug-free society.

Officials appreciated the efforts of the participants and organizers, stating that such events not only boost tourism but also encourage youth to engage in positive and healthy activities.

The "Pedal to the Peak" challenge stands as a successful step towards promoting Baderwah's natural beauty and adventure potential on a wider platform.

DDC Reasi inspects Water Supply Schemes, reviews AMRUT 2.0 works

KT NEWS DESK

REASI, MAY 3: District Development Commissioner Reasi Kumar Abhishek conducted an extensive inspection of various water supply schemes across the district Sunday to assess the performance and ensure adequate availability of drinking water to residents.

During the visit, the DDC, as per an official statement, inspected water supply systems at Nambal, Aghar Ballain and Kalka Station. He also reviewed the main water source at Ghiala. The inspection focused on evaluating the operational status of water sources, storage infrastructure and distribution networks.

Emphasizing the need for equitable water access, he directed officials of the Jal Shakti Department to undertake a comprehensive household survey to identify areas and families facing shortage of water supply. He instructed that necessary corrective measures be implemented on priority. At Kalka Station, the DDC examined the newly constructed water filtration plant and reviewed ongoing repair works under the AMRUT 2.0 scheme. He urged the concerned authorities to accelerate the pace of work and ensure completion well before the onset of the monsoon season. Chief Planning Officer Narinder Kumar, along with the Assistant Executive Engineer and Assistant Engineer of the Jal Shakti Department, accompanied the DDC during the inspection.

ongoing renovation works and stressed adherence to quality and deadlines.

Later, the ADC visited Sungli village to inspect the revered Hidimba Mata Temple, taking stock of development and maintenance works at the site. He also inspected the Sub-District Hospital (SDH), where he reviewed the newly constructed emergency wards along with patient wards to ensure improved healthcare services.

NEET (UG) 2026 concludes smoothly in Anantnag

9112 candidates appear at 29 examination centres



KT NEWS DESK

ANANTNAG, MAY 03: National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET-UG) 2026 was conducted smoothly Sunday at 29 designated examination centres across District Anantnag.

In preparation for the event, the District Administration, as per an official statement, had made elaborate arrangements in advance, deploying adequate manpower and logistics alongside robust security and surveillance protocols to ensure full integrity of the process.

To ensure fairness and transparency as well as compliance with the NTA guidelines, the administration had made certain key measures including deployment of a sufficient number of observers, magistrates, superintendents, deputy superintendents, supervisors, and invigilating staff. Proper training of the deployed staff had also been conducted as part of the preparatory process.

Deputy Commissioner Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, accompanied by ADM Tariq Ahmad Malik (ACR) and other concerned officials, visited several centres including SHMM, GDC (Boys), GDC (Women) and GBMHSS,

Brakpora to take a firsthand stock of the arrangements, logistics and requisite facilities.

During these visits, the respective centre staff briefed the DC on the specific measures taken for candidate verification, seating arrangements, and the technical readiness of the venues.

The DC instructed the officials that the examination be conducted strictly as per the guidelines and SOPs issued by the National Testing Agency (NTA) while extending full support and guidance to the candidates for their ease and convenience. He emphasized maintaining full coordination among the deputed staff and asked them to immediately flag any issues to the District Control Room so that appropriate action could be taken without delay. He reiterated that the smooth, fair, and successful conduct of examinations is essential to ensure integrity of the selection process.

Notably out of 9286 candidates, 9112 (above 98%) appeared for the test at the designated exam centres. They expressed satisfaction with the overall arrangements and the supportive environment provided at the centres.

Free Medical Camp held at GHSS Mantrigram Bandipora

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, MAY 03: In a humanitarian outreach initiative aimed at promoting healthcare and community welfare, the Indian Army in collaboration with the District Administration Bandipora on Sunday organised a free medical camp at Govt. Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Mantrigram, Bandipora, with support from ASG Eye Hospital and Paras Hospitals.

The camp, as per an official statement, witnessed overwhelming participation from local residents, including women, elderly persons, and children, who availed various healthcare facilities provided during the programme. A team of doctors and medical staff conducted general health consultations and provided specialist medical advice

to patients suffering from different ailments.

During the camp, blood pressure and blood sugar tests were conducted free of cost, while essential medicines were also distributed among the beneficiaries. Registration counters and consultation desks were established to ensure smooth management and timely medical assistance to the attendees.

The initiative also carried awareness messages under the ongoing Nasha Mukh Abhiyan, encouraging people to stay away from drug abuse and adopt healthy lifestyles.

On the occasion, locals appreciated the efforts of the Indian Army, District Administration Bandipora, ASG Eye Hospital and Paras Hospitals for organising the camp and extending healthcare support to the people of the area.

Nasha Mukh J&K Abhiyan Casco Cricket Tournament concludes in Shopian

KT NEWS DESK

SHOPIAN, MAY 03: Department of Youth Services and Sports, District Shopian, successfully organized the final match of the Casco Cricket Tournament under the banner of the Nasha Mukh Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan.

The match, as per an official statement, was held at the YSS playfield Shirmal amid great enthusiasm, with active participation from players, officials, and a large number of spectators.

The final fixture was contested between MC Shopian and Block Chitragam. Both teams displayed remarkable discipline, teamwork, and competitive spirit, making the match engaging from start to finish.

In a closely fought contest, Block Chitragam emerged victorious, defeating MC Shopian to clinch the championship title.

The victory was celebrated with

enthusiasm by players and supporters alike.

The event was graced by ADC Shopian Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz as Chief Guest. He appreciated the efforts of the participants and encouraged youth to actively engage in sports and constructive activities.

The winning team was led by BDO Chitragam, Tariq Ahmad Padder, whose leadership played an important role in the team's success.

The tournament also served as a platform to promote the message of a drug free society under the Nasha Mukh Abhiyan.

Participants and attendees were sensitized about the harmful effects of substance abuse and the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle through sports.

The successful arrangement of the tournament highlights the vital role of sports in fostering discipline, unity, confidence, and social responsibility.

Development works inspected across Sub-District Baderwah

KT NEWS DESK

BHADERWAH, MAY 03: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Sunil Kumar Bhutyal Sunday conducted an extensive inspection tour to review the progress of ongoing development works and assess public facilities across different locations in Sub-District Baderwah.

The ADC was accompanied

by the Assistant Engineer (AE), staff members of the R&B (Roads and Buildings) Department, Irrigation Department and the contractors associated with the projects.

During the visit, the ADC inspected the Veterinary Hospital to evaluate livestock healthcare services and reviewed the available infrastructure. He also examined the construction of the irrigation

protection wall at Circular Road, directing officials to maintain quality standards and ensure timely completion.

At the College Link Road, ADC Bhutyal assessed the damaged protection wall and instructed the concerned authorities to expedite repair work to avoid inconvenience to the public. He further visited Boys Higher Secondary School Baderwah, where he reviewed

Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan turns into mass movement: Div Com

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, May 03: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Kumar Garg on Sunday said that 'Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan' has transformed into a "Jan Andolan" within just three weeks and overwhelming participation of people has sent a strong message that everyone is determined to wipe out this menace.

Addressing participants, who had arrived at TRC Football Ground here to join the Padyatra, the Divisional Commissioner said, "The campaign has witnessed massive public participation. In just three weeks, this initiative has taken the shape of a people's movement."

He said over 30,000 awareness programmes have been conducted across Kashmir, reaching "every village and every ward." The campaign, he



added, is no longer limited to schools and colleges, with more than 3,000 religious leaders also joining the effort to eradicate the menace.

Highlighting enforcement measures, the Div Com said the administration is simultaneously focusing on supply chain disruption and strict action against traffickers and peddlers.

"Hotspot identification, tracking, FIRs, arrests, and legal proceedings are being

intensified," he said.

The Divisional Commissioner further said punitive measures also include actions related to driving licences, Aadhaar, passports, property demolition, and revenue records of those involved in drug-related crimes.

To strengthen grassroots vigilance, he said, Nambardar and Chowkidar networks have been activated in every village, while district control rooms have received over 2,000 public

inputs, many of which have already been acted upon.

He said nearly 98 percent of public institutions have become part of the campaign, with increased transparency through open billing and stock registers.

Outlining the next phase, Garg said the focus will shift towards rehabilitation and support for victims, including strengthening de-addiction and counselling services. He credited the Chief Secretary for ensuring deployment of counsellors at schools, colleges and block levels through the Health Department.

The Div Com also expressed gratitude to youth groups, NGOs, media fraternity, and civil society for their active participation. "I urge everyone to continue supporting this campaign with the same enthusiasm and share feedback so that timely action can be ensured," he said.—(KNO)

World Press Freedom Day

Tanvir Sadiq lauds J&K's journalistic fraternity

Assures support for free, fearless Journalism

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 03: On the occasion of International Press Freedom Day, Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Chief Spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq extended his heartfelt appreciation to journalists and members of the media fraternity for their unwavering commitment to truth and public service.

In a statement, Tanvir Sadiq lauded the resilience and dedication of journalists in Kashmir who, despite numerous challenges, continue to play a vital role in keeping citizens informed and holding institutions accountable. He emphasised that a free, responsible and vibrant press remains the cornerstone of a healthy democracy. He also paid solemn tribute to those journalists and media personnel who have lost their lives



in the line of duty, acknowledging their courage and sacrifice in the pursuit of truth.

Reaffirming the government's commitment, Tanvir said that the Omar Abdullah-led elected govt is actively working towards fostering an environment where media professionals can operate with freedom, security, and dignity. He underscored the

importance of ensuring that the press can function without fear or undue constraints, thereby strengthening democratic values in the region.

He further expressed hope that the media fraternity will continue to uphold the highest standards of journalism and serve as a beacon of integrity and accountability in society.

DIG reviews security preparedness in Udhampur

PTI

Jammu, May 03: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, Udhampur-Reasi Range, Shiv Kumar Sharma, chaired an operations-cum-security review meeting on Sunday, stressing the need to further strengthen the intelligence network through effective asset cultivation and sustained community engagement. He passed these directions at the meeting at the Majalta police station in Udhampur district and reviewed operational preparedness during his visits to the headquarters of 84 Brigade Rampur, Majalta and Police Post Khoon, officials said.

He directed officers to intensify Long Range Patrols (LRPs), Short Range Patrols (SRPs) and Cordon and Search Operations (CASOs) to maintain heightened vigilance and operational efficiency.

Sharma also ordered firm legal action against offenders involved



in cases under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and Narcotic Drugs and

Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, besides Over Ground Workers (OGWs), including initiation of

property attachment proceedings wherever warranted. He underscored the

importance of regular interaction with village heads and prominent citizens to ensure the timely flow of actionable intelligence.

The DIG further directed stringent action against drug peddlers and bovine smugglers, citing their alleged nexus with other unlawful and anti-national activities.

To strengthen the overall security grid, he ordered activation of Village Defence Guards (VDGs), intensified naka checking, enhanced patrolling and effective night domination measures in vulnerable areas.

Later, during a public interaction at Battal Morh, Sharma urged locals to cooperate with the police in maintaining peace and order. He assured prompt redressal of public grievances and reiterated the force's commitment to strengthening community-police partnership for ensuring a safe and secure environment, the officials said.

Mahant Rohit Shastri calls on LG Sinha



KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 03: Mahant Rohit Shastri, President, Shri Kailakh Jyotish and Vedic Sansthan Trust called on Lieuten-

ant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday.

He was accompanied by R.K Chhibber, Trustee of the Shri Kailakh Jyotish and Vedic Sansthan Trust.

Srinagar gets facelift ahead of 'Darbar Move'

PTI

Srinagar, May 03: Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, is getting a facelift ahead of the 'Darbar Move', a 150-year-old practice of bi-annual shifting of the administrative capital, with workers busy sprucing up roads and walkways.

Roads with potholes are being repaired and getting a fresh coat of paint ahead of the shifting of the Civil Secretariat and other government offices. The Civil Secretariat, the seat of the Jammu and Kashmir government, will reopen here on Monday -- a week after closing in Jammu, officials said.

Under the practice of 'Darbar Move', the government functions in Jammu during the six winter months and in Srinagar during the summer. The practice was started by Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1872 to escape extreme weather conditions in the two regions.

Continued on

MP Ghulam Ali Khatana concludes two-day Mendhar visit

KT NEWS DESK

Poonch, May 03: Ghulam Ali Khatana, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) concluded his two-day visit to the Mendhar Constituency in District Poonch aimed at reviewing developmental works and addressing public grievances.

On the occasion, SDM Mendhar, Imran Kataria, Executive Officer Waqf Board, Tiku Khan, Ex MLC Murtaza Khan besides all District/ Sectoral officers and officers from line departments were present.

On the first day of the visit, the MP held a



Public Darbar at Pangeli Bridge, Mankote, where he interacted with locals and reviewed

ongoing development activities in the area.

On the second day, the MP held another

Public Darbar at Dak Bungalow Mendhar and later at Panchayat Ghar, Middle Dhargloon in Block Balakote.

During the interaction, villagers and local residents raised several issues, including road projects, bridge construction, electricity supply concerns, non-functional water lift schemes, gaps in health infrastructure, issues related to BRO roads and matters concerning education, agriculture, horticulture schemes and overall developmental works.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Admin imposes restrictions in parts of Doda

Bans unauthorised assemblies for two months

PTI

Jammu, May 03: The administration on Sunday imposed a ban on unauthorised assemblies and protests in parts of Jammu and Kashmir's Doda town for a period of two months under Section 163 of the BNS, citing apprehensions of public disturbance and threat to peace.

The step has been taken in view of the expectations of large gatherings of people in public events in recently released AAP MLA Mehraj Malik in his native Doda district.

According to an order issued by District

Magistrate Krishan Lal, the administration observed that some people were allegedly planning demonstrations and trying to mobilise gatherings, which could lead to untoward incidents and disturb public order.

"In exercise of powers vested in me I hereby order a complete ban over any unauthorised gathering of 5 or more than 5 persons and organising protests or Dharnas in the public places - Clock tower chowk, Dossa road upto Akramabad, sports stadium, within the radius of 100 meters from the

sports stadium and from clock tower up to old Bus Stand except for the events for which the permission has been already granted," Lal said in the order.

The administration said such gatherings could cause obstruction and inconvenience to commuters, passengers and pedestrians, besides posing a threat to public safety.

However, events for which prior permission has already been granted will remain exempted, it said. Violators will be booked under Section 223 of the BNS, the order said.

PCO Srinagar appeals public for self-enumeration

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 03: The Office of the Principal Census Officer (PCO) (Urban) Srinagar Commissioner SMC has issued a public appeal urging all residents of urban Srinagar to actively participate in the Self-Enumeration phase of Census 2027, scheduled to be conducted from 17th May to 31st May 2027.

The appeal highlights that the Self-Enumeration phase marks a significant shift towards a digitally enabled, transparent, and citizen-friendly Census system. It empowers residents to independently submit their demographic and household details through an online platform.

The initiative aims to enhance the accuracy and authenticity of data, reduce dependence on manual data collection, and ensure time-efficient



and seamless participation. It also promotes digital governance and citizen empowerment. The Office emphasized that participation of every household is crucial for building a reliable

statistical foundation for future planning and development of the region.

The Principal Census Officer has urged all residents to complete the self-enumeration process

within the notified timeline and to provide correct, complete, and truthful information. Citizens are advised to access and submit their details through the official Census Self-Enumeration Portal and securely retain the generated Self-Enumeration (SE) ID, which will be required during the verification process.

Residents have also been advised not to delay their participation, as timely submission will help avoid last-minute inconvenience and ensure smooth conduct of Census operations.

To maintain the integrity and reliability of the data, designated Census Enumerators will undertake field verification visits after the completion of the self-enumeration process. During these visits, households will be required to share their SE ID. Citizens have

been requested to extend full cooperation to the enumerators.

The Office reiterated that the Census is a cornerstone of governance and plays a vital role in policy formulation, administrative planning, infrastructure development, urban planning, delivery of welfare schemes, and equitable allocation of resources.

For any queries, clarifications, or technical assistance related to self-enumeration, the public may contact the 24x7 Census Control Room at the Office of the Principal Census Officer (Urban), Srinagar (Er. Ferdous Ahad Bhat: 9419024435, Mehraj Ud Din Matta: 7006887627).

The Office has urged all citizens to treat this exercise as a civic responsibility and national duty, emphasizing that their participation is essential in shaping policies that directly impact the future of society.

Rs 40 lakh worth property of drug peddler attached in Jammu

PTI

Jammu, May 03: Udhampur Police has attached an immovable property worth Rs 40 lakh belonging to an alleged drug peddler here, officials said on Sunday.

The property belongs to Rafiq Ahmed, son of Abdul Karim, a resident of Haji Basi in the Sainik Colony area of Jammu district. The action was taken on Saturday in connection with a case registered at Rehambal police station in Udhampur under various sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. During the investigation, police found that the accused had acquired a residential house from the proceeds of illicit narcotics trade, officials said.

Accordingly, the property was attached under Section 68-F of the NDPS Act, they added. (PTI)

EDITORIAL

A People's March Against Poison

The image of thousands of people walking through the streets of Srinagar, led by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, is a declaration. After years of watching silently as drugs consumed their children, destroyed families and dimmed futures, the people of Jammu and Kashmir have finally said: enough is enough. In just three weeks, the 'Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan' has transformed from a government campaign into a genuine 'Jan Andolan'—a people's movement. And Sunday's mega padyatra in Srinagar, with students, religious clerics, traders, women and youth walking shoulder to shoulder, proved that this fight is no

longer someone else's job. It is everyone's responsibility. The Lieutenant Governor rightly called drug trafficking "silent terrorism". And he is correct. The peddler who sells poison to a teenager is no different from the terrorist who plants a bomb. Both destroy lives. Both target the future of this region. For too long, this truth was ignored. Now, the administration has drawn a clear line: drug peddlers are enemies of the nation and will be treated accordingly. The results of this tough stance are already visible. In just 22 days, 481 FIRs have been registered, 518 smugglers arrested, 24 narco properties attached, 300 driving licences suspended,

and 5 passports cancelled. These are not small numbers. The supply chains are being broken. The financial networks are being tracked. And the message is clear: no one involved in this trade will be spared. But enforcement alone cannot win this war. That is why the public participation seen on Sunday is so important. When communities refuse to stay silent, peddlers lose their cover. When religious leaders speak from mosques, teachers warn in classrooms, and parents keep watch at home, the drug trade cannot thrive. The Divisional Commissioner said over 30,000 awareness programmes have been held and 3,000 religious leaders

have joined the effort. This is how a society fights back. The campaign now has 78 days remaining. The focus must shift to two things: rehabilitation for those who are trapped in addiction and continued vigilance against those who profit from it. De-addiction centres must be strengthened. Counsellors must reach every block. And every citizen must act as the eyes and ears of the administration. The time for silence is over. The drug peddler is an enemy, and enemies must be defeated. Sunday's padyatra was a powerful start. Now, the march must continue—in every lane, every home, and every heart.

Agri Stack: India's Digital Agriculture Revolution

As India moves ahead towards Atmanirbharta and becoming the global food basket, Agri Stack is a forward-looking reform where data empowers farmers, technology strengthens governance and collaboration drives progress

Dr Devesh Chaturvedi

Agriculture sector continues to be the backbone of Indian economy engaging around 46% of its workforce. Concerted efforts have been taken by Government in last decade to raise farmers income through multi-pronged strategy of increasing production/productivity, crop diversification, reducing cost of cultivation, improving price realization of agri-produce, climate resilience and risk mitigation.

Seamless, transparent and efficient delivery of various services or benefits to farmers, through the centrally sponsored or central sector schemes is a priority for the Government, whether at the federal or State level. The essential requirement to assess the entitlement of any cultivator (whether owner, leaseholder or sharecropper) for any scheme benefit is the total agriculture land ownership and the history of crop sown on that land. However, huge variations in the land administration across the country pose a major challenge.

Recognizing the importance and criticality of a standardised farmer database that captures vital information related to ownership and sowing, updated dynamically with strong consent mechanism, the Government launched Digital Agriculture Mission in the year 2024. One pillar of the mission- the Agri Stack is now emerging as a quiet but powerful transformative pillar of this mission. It comprises of three registries- farm, farmer and crop sown. Agri Stack signals a new chapter in India's agricultural journey - one that aligns closely with the hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Farm registry comprises database of geo-referenced agriculture plots, each assigned a unique farm ID. In the second layer, each land-owning farmer is being provided with a unique farm ID with essential information related to each plot owned along with the share in case of co-ownership. The data is dynamically linked to the Record of Rights so that any change in ownership due to inheritance, sale etc gets updated in the farmer registry. The third layer comprises of details of crop sown on each plot, obtained through a Digital/Technologically driven crop survey conducted in each crop season after the sowing is completed.

The Union government has partnered through Memoranda of Understanding with 35 States and Union Territories onboarded. The Mission is being implemented through a strong Centre-State collaboration, using State-of-the-art technology while ensuring complete inclusion.

Agri Stack is a federated database where ownership lies with States/UTs but is accessible to Union Government for delivery of services and data analytics. It seeks to create a verified digital identity for every farmer, link it to precisely mapped land parcels,



and record what crops are grown in each season. The Stack enables rule-based, automated service delivery across schemes and geographies, without requiring farmers to repeatedly prove their identity, land ownership, or crop details. The access of farmer related information is through a robust consent mechanism, ensuring strict adherence to provisions of Privacy and Data Protection related laws.

From paper records to digital foundation For decades, agricultural administration relied heavily on paper-based records and manual survey, which was often a source of harassment to citizens and even corruption. Agri Stack represents a transformational shift away from this legacy. By digitising farmer identities and linking them with land and crop data, it creates a reliable, up-to-date picture of Indian agriculture.

A key milestone in this journey has been the creation of more than 9 crore farmer IDs till date. These digital identities act as a single source of truth, enabling farmers to access multiple services without repeated verification, reducing the transaction costs. For government agencies, they reduce errors in beneficiary identification and help ensure that benefits reach the intended recipients.

The disclaimer, however, is that Agri Stack is primarily to empower farmers for availing various scheme benefits, but not a replacement of land records or certificate of land ownership, even though its dynamic linkage

with Record of Rights ensures authenticity. Digital crop surveys: real-time crop insights

In 2025-16, 24 States conducted the digital crop survey in nearly 30 crore plots across more than 600 districts using mobile devices, geotagging and satellite support. This marks a significant departure from traditional survey methods that were often slow and prone to inconsistencies/errors.

This data improves yield estimation, procurement planning and market forecasting. It also strengthens disaster preparedness by enabling early identification of crop stress due to droughts, floods or pests. For farmers, better data translates into timely and crop specific advisories and quicker support if things go wrong.

An ecosystem built on cooperation and inclusion by design

Recognizing the diversity in land administration across the country, the Architecture has an inbuilt flexibility to tailor it as per the local needs while maintaining the common standards to ensure interoperability, enabling seamless data exchange across states and central systems.

To illustrate, there are States where land records have not been updated for decades and name of forefathers continue. While concerted attempts are being made to ensure updation of land records, but in the interim, successor farmers cultivating land still recorded in the names of deceased owners

can have their farmer ID generated, after verification by revenue department, ensuring continuity of benefits.

Wherever, State laws permit and States agree, sharecroppers and tenant farmers can also be onboarded for availing specific scheme benefits, with robust owner-authorisation mechanisms.

In the North-Eastern States, where community ownership dominates, geo-coordinate-based certification allows inclusion without disrupting customary practices.

How will it benefit the farmers?

For farmers, the common digital layer translates into fewer forms, fewer visits to local offices, and greater transparency in accessing government schemes and services. Credible digital records with dynamically updated details of land holdings and cropping history enables banks and insurers assess risk and design products tailored to farmers' needs.

Agri Stack has the potential to strengthen farmer collectives. Verified data can help Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) aggregate produce, negotiate better prices and access working capital more easily.

Land data integrated with crops sown and soil health has the potential to unleash a transformation in agriculture extension as now tailored advisories can be designed and disseminated. At very low cost. Farmers can receive personalised guidance on optimal sowing times, irrigation schedules, nutrient

application and pest management based on local conditions.

How will the governance and policy process be impacted?

Agri Stack provides opportunity to reform governance processes and foster evidence-based data driven policy making. Policymakers have access to accurate and timely data to track cropping patterns, anticipate supply-demand gaps and intervene in a timely manner to prevent price volatility.

Once a farmer's identity, land holding, crop sown is verified digitally, transactions related to subsidy disbursement in cash or kind, crop insurance, procurement, or credit etc can be processed digitally and seamlessly. The Aadhaar enabled payment gateways ensures transfer of benefit to the intended beneficiary. The reformed system enhances transparency and accountability by creating a clear digital trail for public expenditure.

It has been observed that Ministries at Federal and State level, and in some cases, even various divisions in a specific Ministries have developed their own farmer databases for scheme implementation. Agri Stack breaks such self-created silos by developing a common but universal digital layer allowing agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, cooperatives, revenue, food, fertiliser, credit, and insurance systems to work using the same verified data. This not only improves operational efficiency, but also reduces the burden on farmers to register on multiple portals for availing various scheme benefits.

Several States have gone ahead to successfully implement use cases of Agri Stack. Chhattisgarh used the Agri Stack to seamlessly register farmers for MSP based paddy procurement during last kharif. Madhya Pradesh used the database for its Price Deficiency based support to Soyabean farmers under PMASHA. Maharashtra is using Agri Stack for all its DBT based benefits including Disaster Relief.

Catalysing innovation

AgriStack's open, standardised architecture provides an ecosystem for innovation, especially using artificial intelligence. As the Stack matures, there are opportunities for Startups to build applications that combine crop data, weather forecasts and market prices into user-friendly tools.

Hon'ble Finance Minister in her recent public discourses highlighted Agri Stack as "next big thing from India" and "next UPI like revolution". As India moves ahead towards Atmanirbharta and becoming the global food basket, Agri Stack is a forward-looking reform where data empowers farmers, technology strengthens governance and collaboration drives progress.

The author is former Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India

AI And The Self You Left Behind

AI isn't stealing your intelligence, you just stopped reaching for it

John Nosta

The surrender of your cognitive voice to AI isn't loss of ability. It's estrangement from the self that thinks.

Let's unpack this carefully, because the self that thinks isn't a fixed thing. William James was right that consciousness is a stream, not a monument. It's fluid and shaped by the dimensions of our humanity from language to culture to tools and even to the people with whom we debate this very concept. AI may simply be the latest participant in that ongoing construction. So, if the self was never stable, what exactly are we becoming estranged from?

The answer isn't: a fixed identity. It's: a process. It's how you move through a problem. It's the specific texture of your uncertainty, the way your thinking hesitates and then commits, the half-formed idea that

becomes, through friction, yours. That process is recognizable and you know it when you're in it. You know it, too, as a kind of meeting or impact with the problem, and with yourself. And you notice when the meeting doesn't happen.

Today we've grown particularly comfortable with medical metaphors for this absence. Atrophy. Dependency. Addiction. They position the person as patient and the technology as agent that's doing something to us. And this insult is amenable to intervention and treatable with better habits or stronger regulation. This perspective misses the mechanism.

AI doesn't degrade cognition directly as a disease that targets a biological structure or function. It's my sense that AI reshapes the cost structure of thinking. And we, as rational humans, optimize accordingly. The hard paragraph to draft is no longer

something you struggle with. It becomes something you route around.

The moment you reached for AI wasn't because you couldn't think for yourself. It's because your thinking felt inefficient compared to what the machine returns in the click of a button. The key point here is that this isn't dependency; it's preference that's taking shape. And preferences, repeated, become the shape of a life. Until, of course, the choice disappears into habit and the habit stops feeling like a choice.

What gets traded away isn't capacity. Your intrinsic cognitive ability likely remains. What changes is the tolerance for cognitive toil or friction. These aren't trivial inefficiencies that are just optimized away. They're the occasion for driving development and growth. Remove the friction and you remove development and growth.

I believe that this is the particular

vulnerability of people who think well, because, for them, the substitution is most convincing. The AI output may most closely resemble what they would have produced, and that gap can be harder to see when it's very narrow. The person who struggles to write was never tempted to believe the machine's voice was their own. The person who thinks well is precisely the one most likely to mistake the echo for the original.

Yes, estrangement is the right word because it's relational and gradual. Something that was close becomes unfamiliar as your own voice starts to feel effortful. The AI voice feels curiously more like you, or perhaps the you that you aspire to be. It's a rational trade-off that fits nicely into this cost structure. That's precisely what makes it hard to resist and harder to reverse.

You can rebuild a muscle. Rebuilding a relationship with your own thinking

requires something different and may represent something unprecedented in human history. First you need to recognize that you've drifted and then tolerate the discomfort of return. Today's instant gratification and dopamine hits may have crafted a path that "need" go only in one direction.

The experience of thinking isn't a process that's simply defined by outputs. Its value exists because it's where you find yourself in a thought you authored. What cognitive estrangement from AI disrupts is exactly that.

Once you've drifted too far, the loss isn't in what you can do, it's in what you can still find.

John Nosta is the founder of NostaLab and the author of The Borrowed Mind: Reclaiming Human Thought in the Age of AI.

Source: Psychology Today

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

Have We Lost The Human In Humanity?

The need of the hour is to create mass awareness of values such as tolerance, humility and mutual respect in order to realise our dream of a world filled with peace, happiness and harmony

Rajyogi Brahma Kumar Nikunj ji

We all dream of a better world where there is peace, happiness and harmony, don't we? No one would like the degradation of the environment, loss of human lives due to wars and murders, corrosion of the human spirit by crime and corruption, or dehumanisation through poverty and troublesome social, economic and political conditions, embroiled in high tension and turmoil that drain human energy and make life miserable.

On the contrary, all would like life to be characterised by harmony and health, well-being and wealth, and a sense of happiness and purity.

But the question is: what are those values, and how can such a socio-politico-economic system be established which has those values and enhances human experience, enabling men and women to have a lifestyle that makes such a society viable? Looking around, it can be said that much of the conflict in society today is due to a lack or absence of tolerance. Yes, it is tolerance of differences in views, diversity of religious beliefs and cultures, and plurality of races and nations that brings about unity and co-operation and, in turn, leads to concerted efforts for the amelioration of the miserable condition of the world.

However, tolerance or unity cannot exist or survive alone. In fact, no value or virtue can stand by itself. In the case of tolerance, there is either some common purpose that holds people in unity or an urgent common need waiting to be fulfilled that compels people to tolerate. Even then, tolerance



Disclaimer: This is an AI generated image.

becomes weak and fragile if there is suspicion about a person's motives, doubt about intentions, or awareness of a lack of such

human values as honesty, sincerity and sympathy, and above all, the absence of the spirit of co-existence and fellow-feeling.

In our lifetime, we come across many variants and variants, and one requires spiritual strength to tolerate those who have violent,

obsessive and inhuman tendencies as their constant companions. Tolerance is easier when one is confronted with civilised and wise people, even if they are critics or opponents. However, a higher degree of tolerance is required when dealing with those who are compulsive, vile or wicked. For this, one must develop supportive values such as goodwill, patience, introversion, calmness and, above all, love. Our present condition is the result of neglect or violation of these values. We have gradually lost the human aspect of our lives and become more or less like machines, resulting in a lack of friendship, fellow-feeling and love.

Our knowledge of science, technology, communication and managerial skills has not brought inner happiness because honesty, sincerity, cordiality, fair dealing, duty, discipline and mutual trust are declining. In other words, there has been a rapid erosion of social, moral and family values. It is not that science, technology or management skills have caused our suffering; rather, the fall in moral standards has prevented them from yielding their full benefits. People do recognise the importance of moral values, but they often lack the spiritual knowledge needed to practise them effectively, as well as forms of meditation that help internalise these values and create a deep experience of peace and happiness. Thus, the need of the hour is to create mass awareness of values such as tolerance, humility and mutual respect in order to realise our dream of a world filled with peace, happiness and harmony.

Source: The Pioneer

Bacteriophages: Meet The Viruses That Hunt Superbugs

These are viruses that multiply inside bacteria and cause their death. In some cases they are used in the fight against bacteria instead of antibiotics.

Manal Mohammed

Bacteriophages, or phages, are viruses that infect and kill bacteria. These microscopic predators are found everywhere from soil and water to food and the human gut. Because they attack only specific bacteria, researchers are increasingly exploring them as tools for reducing harmful bacteria in humans and animals without disturbing helpful microbes.

That makes them especially interesting at a time of rising antimicrobial resistance. This is when bacteria evolve ways to survive drugs designed to kill them. It's a global health threat driven in part by the overuse of antibiotics in medicine and agriculture. Unlike broad-spectrum antibiotics, which kill many different kinds of bacteria and can also disrupt helpful gut microbes, research has shown that phages may be able to remove harmful bacteria with less disruption to the wider microbiome.

This has led researchers to investigate phages both as nutraceuticals, dietary supplements intended to promote health, and as feed additives in livestock production. In both cases, the aim is similar: reduce harmful bacteria, support gut health and potentially cut reliance on antibiotics.

How phages work

Phages work very differently from antibiotics. Rather than killing a broad range of bacteria, each phage typically infects only particular bacterial species or closely related types of bacteria.

When a phage encounters its target bacterium, it attaches to the cell and injects its genetic instructions. The virus then replicates inside the bacterium until the cell bursts. This releases new phage particles that go on to infect other bacteria.

This precision is one reason phages are attracting attention as a possible way to fight harmful bacteria. Unlike broad-spectrum antibiotics, which can disrupt entire communities of microbes, phages may be able to remove particular harmful bacteria without the same wider effects on the microbiome, according to studies of phage-microbiome interactions and research on antibiotic-associated microbiome disruption.

That raises the possibility that phages could be used not simply to kill bacteria, but to shape communities of microbes in ways that support health. Researchers have explored their potential in food safety,



agriculture and human health.

In recent years, researchers and biotechnology companies have begun exploring phages as dietary supplements for humans. The idea is that people could ingest phages to reduce harmful gut bacteria in the hope of restoring balance in the gut microbiome, the community of microbes that lives in the digestive system.

Early findings are encouraging, though still preliminary. For example, one human clinical study found that a commercially available phage product targeting *E. coli* reduced levels of the bacteria in the gut without causing major disruption to the rest of the microbiome.

Other work has examined phage products designed to support digestive health by targeting bacteria associated with digestive discomfort or dysbiosis, an imbalance in gut

microbes. A randomised controlled trial of a phage-based supplement reported improvements in digestive symptoms among participants with mild digestive issues.

This is still an emerging field, and the evidence remains limited. But the results so far suggest phage-based nutraceuticals could eventually form part of diet-based approaches to improving gut health.

There are already signs of commercial interest. In the US, phage products have been approved for certain food safety uses, such as reducing bacterial contamination on foods. Phage-containing supplements are already on sale.

Public acceptance, however, may prove just as important as scientific progress. Because viruses are usually associated with disease, researchers and manufacturers will need to explain clearly why these "good

viruses" are different. They occur naturally, they are highly specific and they target bacteria rather than human cells.

Improving animal health through feed additives

Phages may also have an important role to play in livestock production. Farm animals often carry disease-causing bacteria such as *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter* and harmful strains of *E. coli*. These bacteria can harm animal health and contaminate food products. They can contribute to food-borne illness in humans.

Phage-based feed additives are being developed to target these bacteria in livestock. By incorporating phages into feed or drinking water, farmers may be able to reduce harmful bacteria while preserving beneficial microbes that support digestion and the immune system.

Experimental studies have produced promising results. In poultry, phage supplementation has been shown to reduce the presence of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, two of the most common causes of food-borne infection worldwide. Research in pigs has also found that phage treatments can reduce harmful *E. coli* infections, improving gut health and growth.

Phages are also being investigated as alternatives to antibiotic feed additives used to prevent diseases such as liver abscesses – pockets of infection in the liver – in cattle. Because phages replicate only when their target bacteria are present, their effects may naturally taper off once those bacteria are gone, making them a potentially useful way to control infection.

Despite promising research, bacteriophage supplements are not yet widely authorised as feed additives in the UK. Regulators require extensive evidence of safety, stability and effectiveness. Because phages are biological entities that can evolve alongside bacteria, agencies must also consider whether they remain genetically consistent over time and what effects they might have on other microbial communities in the environment.

Even so, regulatory progress is emerging elsewhere. Phage-based food safety products targeting disease-causing bacteria such as *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Salmonella* have already been approved in several countries. This includes the US, where they are already being used in food safety applications.

More recently, European regulators authorised the first bacteriophage-based feed additive designed to reduce *Salmonella* in poultry. That marks an important step towards broader adoption of the technology.

Interest in bacteriophages reflects a wider shift in how microbes are understood in relation to health. If research continues to advance, and regulation keeps pace, phage-based nutraceuticals and feed supplements could become part of a new generation of more targeted ways to shape the microbiome, supporting both human health and more sustainable agriculture.

Tiny though they are, these bacterial viruses may end up playing a significant role in how we manage harmful bacteria.

The author is Senior Lecturer, Medical Microbiology, University of Westminster
Source: The Conversation

UK military says a bulk carrier near Strait of Hormuz reports being attacked

Dubai, May 03: A bulk carrier near the Strait of Hormuz has reported being attacked by multiple small craft, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said Sunday, marking at least two dozen attacks in and around the strait since the Iran war began.



All crew aboard the unidentified carrier were safe after the attack off Sirik, Iran. The report warns vessels to transit with caution.

Iranian officials have asserted that they continue to control the strait and that ships not affiliated with the United States or Israel can pass if they pay a toll.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

The fragile three-week ceasefire appears to be holding, though President Donald Trump on Saturday told journalists that further strikes remained a possibility.

Iran stands firm on Strait of Hormuz

Trump has offered a plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, where about a fifth of the world's trade in oil and natural gas typically passes, along with fertilizer badly needed by farmers around the world.

Iran's grip on the strait,

imposed after the US and Israel launched the war on Feb. 28, has shaken global markets.

Iran's deputy parliament speaker on Sunday said Tehran "will not back down from our position on the Strait of Hormuz, and it will not return to its prewar conditions." Ali Nikzad, who has no decision-making power in parliament, spoke while visiting port facilities on strategic Larak Island.

Nikzad reiterated Iran's position that any ship not associated with the US or Israel can pass after paying a toll. Tehran effectively closed the strait by attacking and threatening ships.

The US has warned shipping companies they could face sanctions for paying Iran in any form, including digital assets, to pass safely. Meanwhile, the US naval blockade since April 13 is depriving Tehran of oil revenue it needs to shore up its ailing

economy.

"We think that they've gotten less than \$1.3 million in tolls, which is a pittance on their previous daily oil revenues," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told Fox News on Sunday. He said Iran's oil storage is rapidly filling up and "they're going to have to start shutting in wells, which we think could happen in the next week."

Iran's currency continues to tumble

On Sunday, the second day of Iran's working week, the rial weakened further against the US dollar. In Tehran's Ferdowsi Street, the capital's main currency exchange hub, the dollar was trading at 1,840,000 rials.

Analysts say there is a strong possibility the currency will slip further.

The rial was trading at 1.3 million to the dollar in December, a record low at the time, and

triggered widespread protests over the worsening economy. Markets in Tehran remain unstable, with prices of some goods rising daily.

According to reports in Iranian media, several factories have not renewed contracts for workers after the Iranian new year in March, and significant numbers have lost their jobs.

Yousef Pezeshkian, the son and adviser of President Masoud Pezeshkian, wrote on Telegram that both the United States and Iran see themselves as the winner of the war and are unwilling to back down.

Nobel committee urges treatment for Iranian laureate

The Norwegian Nobel Committee on Saturday urged Iran to immediately transfer imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi for treatment by her medical team in Tehran after her health sharply deteriorated.

The committee said it was in touch with Mohammadi's family and lawyer, and that the 2023 laureate's life remains at risk.

The rights lawyer fainted twice in prison on Friday in the northwestern city of Zanjan, her foundation said, and was admitted to a local hospital. Her lawyers have said she is believed to have suffered a heart attack in late March.

SC to hear today PIL seeking stringent guidelines for Aadhaar to adolescents, adults

PTI

New Delhi, May 03: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea seeking a direction to the Unique Identification Authority of India to issue new Aadhaar cards only to citizens up to the age of six years, and frame stringent guidelines for its issuance to adolescents and adults to stop infiltrators from masquerading as Indian citizens.

As per the apex court's causerlist of May 4, the plea would come up for hearing before a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Jyotsna Singh.

The Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay has also sought a direction to the authorities to install display boards at common service centres stating that the 12-digit unique identification number is only a "proof of identity" and not a proof of citizenship, address or date of birth.

Besides all the states and Union Territories, the plea has made the UIDAI -- which is the authority that issues Aadhaar -- and the Union ministries of home, law and justice, and electronics and information technology as parties.

The plea, filed through advocate Ashwani Dubey, said Aadhaar, originally intended as



a proof of identity, has increasingly become a "foundational document" enabling individuals to obtain other identification documents, such as ration cards, domicile certificates and voter identity cards.

"The UIDAI has issued 144 crore Aadhaar and 99 percent Indians have been enrolled. Therefore, the petitioner is filing this writ petition as a PIL under Article 32, seeking a direction to UIDAI to issue new Aadhaar to children only and frame new stringent guidelines for adolescents and adults, so as to stop infiltrators from getting it and masquerading as Indian citizens," the plea said.

It said the need to file the plea arose when the petitioner came to know the manner in which infiltrators are able to procure Aadhaar

through a verification process that is weak and can be easily manipulated.

"Foreigners apply for Aadhaar under the 'foreign' category. But infiltrators apply for Aadhaar under the 'Indian citizen' category and get it easily made. Thereafter, they obtain a ration card, birth and domicile certificate, driving licence, et cetera, essentially becoming indistinguishable from Indian citizens..." it said.

Besides seeking other directions, the plea has raised legal questions, including whether the Aadhaar Act 2016 has become "temporarily unreasonable" for failing to keep up with the legislative intent of distinguishing foreigners from Indian citizens.

It said the alleged misuse of Aadhaar undermines targeted welfare delivery and leads to diversion of public resources.

Skeleton episode: Jeetu Munda forgives bank officials

PTI

Bhubaneswar/Keonjhar, May 03: Jeetu Munda, who carried the skeleton remains of his sister to a rural bank in Odisha's Keonjhar district as proof of her death to withdraw money from her account, on Sunday, said he does not want any action against bank officials who allegedly harassed him.

Munda (50), a native of Dianali village under Ereendei gram panchayat in Patana block in Keonjhar district, said, "I have received money deposited in the name of my sister after carrying her skeleton remains to the bank. They (bank) have got the proof of my sister's death and released the money immediately. It is a fact that they harassed me. But I do not want any action against them after receiving money. They delivered cash to me at our home."

"What is the point of taking

action against officials after getting money," he said, adding that he was not ashamed of the entire episode.

"Had I not brought the skeleton remains to the bank, they would not have given our family's money deposited in the name of my sister, who is dead. I have not done anything wrong," he said.

Jeetu, who is a bachelor and stayed with his 56-year-old widowed sister, who died on January 26, 2026, claimed that he did not have any remorse over digging the skeleton out of the graveyard.

"Now people say that it was a mistake to dig out the remains of a dead person. But I had no alternative but to do so as bank officials wanted the thumb impression of my sister, who had died three months ago," Jeetu, belonging to the Munda tribe, said.

The tribal man had exhumed the skeletal remains



of his sister Kalra Munda (56), who died in January. He then walked around 3 km to the Maliposi branch of the Odisha Gramineen Bank and produced

it before the official as proof of her death. A video of Munda carrying the skeleton has gone viral on social media. Jeetu said that he was

emotionally attached to his elder sister, Kalra Munda, and both of them stayed at one home while his elder brother Raibu Munda (now dead) and younger brother Shankar Munda lived separately in the village.

"I was cooking and feeding my elder sister when she was bedridden. Her death was a great blow to me. But she has blessed me. I have received around Rs 15 lakh from different people for carrying her skeletal remains," Jeetu told a group of journalists who visited his village on Sunday.

Kalra Munda had deposited Rs 19,300 at the Maliposi branch of Odisha Gramineen Bank by selling the family's oxen.

"She had married Tadia Munda of Rameikhamar village (Gandia Tahasil) in Dhenkanal district. After the death of her husband, she shifted back to her paternal

native place at Dianali village, 40 years ago, along with her child. Her child also died after some time. Since then, she was living with her brother Jeetu Munda," the official said.

Asked about the money received from his sister's bank account, Jeetu Munda said that the amount of Rs 19,402 (including interest) was divided into three parts. Jeetu got one portion, his elder brother's widow received another portion, and his younger brother Shankar Munda also got an equal share.

"However, money received from the government and other donations is deposited in my account at a bank in Patana," Jeetu said.

Jeetu said he has so far spent Rs 20,000 on the preparation to hold a community feast to be given to villagers on May 6. "Though we had performed my sister's last rites after her death in January, now we have

to do it again because her skeleton was dug from the grave according to Munda tribe tradition," Jeetu said.

Apart from being included in the state government's social security schemes, Jeetu Munda has received money from different sources. While Physics Wallah donated the highest amount of Rs 10 lakh to Jeetu Munda, he also received Rs 1 from Thaagam Foundation, Rs 50,000 from Khidmat Foundation and Rs 50,000 from AAP MLA Sanjay Singh, and others donated Rs 95,000.

The Keonjhar District Red Cross Society donated Rs 30,000, local Patana MLA gave Rs 10,000, Keonjhar MP Rs 5,000, Keonjhar district BJD Rs 20,000, Odisha Congress Rs 24,000 and Youth Congress Rs 50,000.

Though Jeetu Munda has forgiven the "erring" bank officials, the state government's administrative inquiry into the matter is underway.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Our neighbouring country

days. During this period, 518 drug smugglers and peddlers were sent to jail, while 24 houses, which were proceeds of crime, were demolished and property worth crores was seized. Kashmir alone accounted for 26 of these attachments. In addition, authorities have recommended the cancellation of more than 300 driving licences.

Across the region, cancellation of 325 vehicle registrations has been recommended. Nearly 3,000 drug stores were inspected, leading to 107 license suspensions and one FIR. These figures highlight how police and civil administration, backed by public cooperation, are enforcing a strict "Zero Tolerance to Drugs" policy aimed at dismantling the supply chain completely," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He issued a stern warning to narco-terror networks stating that drug syndicates, and anti-national element's time on Jammu Kashmir's soil is over.

"Our agencies, our administration, and our people stand united to dismantle every smuggling ring and peddler operation. We are tracking the financial trails of drug cartels. Every link will be broken, every mechanism destroyed. I pledge to the people that every trafficker will be exposed, every criminal will face justice, and anyone, inside or outside Jammu Kashmir, who has aided the drug network will be held accountable under the full force of law," the Lieutenant Governor said. (KNO)

LG calls for focused

The Lieutenant Governor laid special emphasis on youth engagement through sports and recreational activities. He instructed the Deputy Commissioners to ensure the development of playgrounds in all panchayats and the strengthening of sports infrastructure across districts.

He also directed the regular organisation of sports competitions and youth engagement activities under the banner of the Nasha Mukta J&K Abhiyaan, enabling young people to channel their energy and talent into positive pursuits and stay away from substance abuse.

Reiterating the administration's

zero-tolerance policy towards narcotics, the Lieutenant Governor called for strict and visible enforcement actions against those involved in drug trafficking.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised the swift implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for the cancellation or suspension of driving licenses and passport and other documents of drug peddlers. He also called for prompt identification and seizure of properties linked to narcoterrorists and drug smugglers. He further stressed intensified inspection of pharmaceutical shops to prevent misuse of prescription drugs and also enhanced vigilance in and around educational institutions and vulnerable areas.

The Lieutenant Governor also directed Deputy Commissioners to identify and take appropriate action against the fake or unauthorised drug de-addiction and rehabilitation centres, ensuring that only certified institutions operate within the established regulatory framework.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted the importance of strengthening Mahila Samitis and Youth Clubs as vital community institutions in the fight against drug abuse. He called for their effective functioning and active involvement in awareness campaigns, early identification of vulnerable individuals, and community-based monitoring mechanisms.

He also directed for utilizing Block Diwas and Thana Diwas as platforms for addressing public grievances and strengthening trust between citizens and the administration.

The Lieutenant Governor further directed the officers to take advance and comprehensive measures for the smooth conduct of upcoming major religious events, including the annual Shri Amarnathji Yatra and Muharram. He emphasised the need to ensure adequate arrangements to facilitate the convenience and safety of the people.

'Jan Andolan': Thousands

policy against narcotics, stressing that strict action against drug traffickers is being complemented by widespread awareness efforts. He stressed that the involvement of youth, civil

society and religious leaders is crucial for long-term success.

A religious cleric present at the event said, "We will take this message to mosques and communities. This is our duty to protect families from this menace."

Following the formal programme, the Lieutenant Governor flagged off the Padyatra towards Clock Tower Srinagar.

The march covered a distance of approximately 1.7 kilometres, moving from TRC Stadium along Residency Road towards Lal Chowk. Participants carried placards, raised slogans and actively engaged with the public to spread awareness against drug abuse.

Students formed a vibrant segment of the rally. "We are marching for our future. Drugs are destroying lives, and we want to be part of the solution," said Tufail Ahmad a student participant.

The padyatra reached Polo View Market, where a skit performance was organised to creatively highlight the dangers of addiction and the importance of timely intervention. The performance drew attention from bystanders and further amplified the campaign message.

The march then proceeded towards Lal Chowk, where it culminated in a signature campaign. A large number of participants and local residents signed in support of the anti-drug initiative, marking a strong public endorsement.

Meanwhile, officials said elaborate and multi-layered security arrangements were put in place to ensure the smooth conduct of the event. Police and paramilitary forces were deployed across the route, with anti-sabotage checks, area domination and enhanced surveillance measures.

Quick Reaction Teams (QRTs) and emergency response units were strategically stationed to deal with any contingency. Health services remained on high alert, with ambulances, mobile medical units and healthcare personnel deployed at regular intervals. Fire and emergency services, along with disaster response teams, were also kept on standby throughout the programme.

The city, particularly areas around Lal Chowk

and adjoining routes, wore a festive-like look, with banners, hoardings and public messaging prominently displayed.

As already reported by KNO, extensive preparations, public mobilisation and heightened security arrangements were put in place to make event a major success. (KNO)

Indian startup's

across diverse environmental conditions, the company said.

As a dual-use Earth observation satellite, the mission will support use cases across defence, agriculture, disaster management, maritime monitoring, and infrastructure planning.

The satellite is also expected to complement India's broader initiatives, including the 29 active Earth Observation satellites outlined in ISRO's recent annual report.

The launch came after five years of indigenous research and development, and extensive environmental testing and performance validation of the Mission Drishti.

In a statement, Lt Gen AK Bhatt (Retd), director general of Indian Space Association (ISpA), said, "GalaxEye has achieved what only a few global players have, which is seamlessly combining optical and SAR capabilities on a single platform to enable persistent, all-weather intelligence."

What stands out is not just the technology, but its broader impact on how downstream applications will increasingly define value in the space economy, particularly in Earth observation, where timely, decision-grade insights are critical," he added.

ISpA is the premier industry association of space and satellite companies in the country. Union Minister Jitendra Singh also took note of the Mission Drishti launch, saying the development marked a significant milestone in India's space journey.

In a post on X, the minister said, "The successful launch of the world's first OptoSAR satellite, and the largest privately-built satellite in the country, reflects the immense potential of our young innovators driving nation-building." GalaxEye aims to scale up Mission Drishti to a constellation of 10 satellites by 2030,

developing a robust and sovereign Earth observation infrastructure for India.

Testament to

in India is a testament to the youth's passion for innovation and nation-building.

In a post on X, the Prime Minister said, "Mission Drishti by GalaxEye marks a major achievement in our space journey. The successful launch of the world's first OptoSAR satellite and the largest privately-built satellite in India is a testament to our youth's passion for innovation and nation-building. Heartiest congratulations and best wishes to the founders and the entire team of GalaxEye."

The achievement underscores India's growing capabilities in the private space sector, with GalaxEye's breakthrough satellite technology combining optical and synthetic aperture radar (SAR) imaging capabilities.

Will boost India's

optical cameras and all-weather radar. Bengaluru-based space start-up GalaxEye's Mission Drishti satellite was launched on Sunday aboard Falcon 9, developed by SpaceX, from California (US).

In a post on X, Shah said, "Congratulations to our young scientists and engineers at GalaxEye for building Mission Drishti, the world's first OptoSAR satellite combining optical cameras and all-weather radar."

Mission Drishti is the world's first OptoSAR satellite, integrating electro-optical (EO) and synthetic aperture radar (SAR) sensors into a single operational platform, according to the company.

He said the launch of India's largest privately built satellite would transform how the Earth is observed and highlight the capabilities of the country's youth on the global stage.

"The launch will change how our Earth is observed and emboss the prowess of our youth on the globe, realising Modi Ji's vision of a space-power India. All my best wishes are with you for your future endeavours," he added.

8,925 passengers travel

ease of travel in Jammu and Kashmir.

Will the power pendulum swing? Result day for West Bengal, Assam, TN, Kerala and Puducherry

PTI
New Delhi/Kolkata/Chennai, May 03: Counting of votes will be held on Monday in Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala, Puducherry and West Bengal after a riveting high-voltage contest with the outcome crucial for prominent ruling regional parties like the TMC and DMK as well as the BJP, Congress and the Left.

The exercise will begin at 8 am, starting with the postal ballots, at the counting centres, which will have a three-tier security system. In a first, the Election Commission has introduced a QR code-based Photo Identity Card system through ECINET to prevent unauthorised entry into counting centres. Votes will be counted across 77 centres for 293 assembly seats in West Bengal, which has witnessed unprecedented security deployment this time and an acrimony-filled run-up to the result day, with both the ruling TMC and opposition BJP expressing apprehensions of vote manipulation.

The two-phase polls in the state ended on April 29, with its highest-ever voter turnout of 92.47 per cent since Independence.

The election was countermanded in one constituency - Falta - in South 24 Parganas district due to "severe electoral offences" and fresh polls will be held there on May 21.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC) is hoping to win its fourth consecutive term by overcoming a spirited challenge from the main opposition



BJP, while the CPI(M) and the Congress are trying to reclaim a foothold following their wipe-out in the 2021 polls. Smaller parties like Humayun Kabir's AJUP and Asaduddin Owasi's AIMIM are also trying their luck in some crucial pockets.

The poll body has scaled down the number of counting centres this year to 77 from 87 announced earlier, and 108 in 2021, while putting in place a multi-layered security grid.

"Comprehensive security arrangements have been made to ensure that counting is conducted in a peaceful, transparent and orderly manner," a senior EC official said.

The EC has deployed 165 additional counting observers and 77 police officers. It has introduced stringent access control measures at the counting centres, including banning mobile phones except for returning officers and observers.

The BJP-led NDA is hoping for a hat-trick in Assam. EVMs, holding the electoral fates of 722 hopefuls from 126 assembly constituencies of the state, will be opened at 40 counting

centres across 35 districts.

Twenty-five companies (around 100 personnel each) of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) have been deployed to guard the counting centres and the strongrooms, housing the electronic voting machines (EVMs). Two additional CAPF companies will be kept on static duty, while 93 companies of state armed police have been deployed in the districts, officials said. Polling in the state was held on April 9, with 85.96 per cent turnout. Among the 722 candidates, the Congress has the highest 99, followed by the BJP with 90, AIUDF with 30, NDA allies Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) with 26 and Bodo Peoples' Front (BPF) with 11 nominees.

In the opposition alliance, Rajiv Dal contested in 13 seats, Assam Jatiya Parishad in 10, CPI(M) in three, and All Party Hill Leaders Conference in two.

Among the high-profile candidates are Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of the BJP, the Congress state unit chief Gaurav Gogoi. Assembly Speaker Biswajit Daimary and Rajiv Dal Chief and MP Akhil

Gogoi.

In Kerala, buoyed by its performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and recent local body elections, the Congress-led UDF is hoping to oust the Left Democratic Front (LDF), which has been in power for two terms, while the BJP-led NDA is attempting to gain a foothold in the state with a bipolar polity.

A defeat for the LDF would also mark the first time since the 1960s that Left parties are not in power in any Indian state.

A total of 883 candidates contested the election for 140 seats in the state. There are 140 counting centres across 43 locations.

Officials said that 15,464 personnel have been deployed for the exercise, comprising 140 returning officers, 1,340 additional returning officers, 4,208 micro observers, 4,208 counting supervisors, and 5,563 counting assistants.

As many as 25 companies of central forces have been deployed alongside state police personnel to guard the counting centres. The BJP-led NDA, although not in contention to form the government, views the election as crucial to expanding its footprint in Kerala after failing to win any seats in 2021.

The ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu is hoping for a second consecutive term after contesting in a changed political arena as, apart from its main rival AIADMK, there were new entrants like actor-politician Vijay-led TVK's and Tamil nationalist Seeman's NTK.

All arrangements are in

place, including a comprehensive three-tier security plan, for counting of votes on May 4 at the 62 designated counting centres across the state, Chief Electoral Officer, Tamil Nadu, Archana Patnaik said.

Approximately 1.25 lakh personnel, who include officials and micro-observers on vote-counting duty and police, have been deployed.

As many as 234 counting halls have been arranged for EVMs. An additional 240 halls have been designated for the counting of postal ballots and electronically transmitted postal ballots (ETPBs). A total of 10,545 counting personnel have been drafted for counting duty, supported by 4,624 micro-observers.

The Election Commission has deputed 234 Counting Observers, one for each Assembly constituency, to oversee the counting proceedings.

In Puducherry, six counting centres have been set up across the Union Territory.

The NDA comprising AINRC, BJP, AIADMK and LJK faces a challenge from the INDIA bloc comprising the Congress, DMK and the VCK.

Counting of votes will also be held in eight seats in Goa, Karnataka, Nagaland, Gujarat and Maharashtra where bypolls were held last month following the death of sitting MLAs.

The eight constituencies are: Ponda in Goa, Bagalkot and Davnagere South in Karnataka, Koridang in Nagaland, Dharmarajan in Tripura, Umreth in Gujarat, and Rahuri and Baramati in Maharashtra.

Iran: Ball in US court to choose diplomacy or confrontation

AFP

Tehran, May 03: Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Sunday that the United States faced a choice between an "impossible" military operation or a "bad deal" with the Islamic republic.

In a statement carried by state television, the Guards intelligence organization said that "Trump must choose between 'an impossible operation or a bad deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran.'"

It cited what it described as a "shift in tone" from China, Russia, and Europe toward Washington as well as what it called an Iranian "deadline" over the US naval blockade.

US President Donald Trump said Saturday he will review a new Iranian peace proposal, but cast doubt over its prospects as he left open the possibility of future attacks on Iran.

Negotiations between the two countries have been deadlocked since a ceasefire came into effect on April 8, with one round of peace talks to end the more than two-month war having failed in Pakistan.

The dour outlook came after Iran's Tasnim and Fars news agencies reported Tehran submitted a 14-point proposal to mediator Islamabad. Details included ending the conflict on all fronts and enacting a new framework for the crucial Strait of Hormuz, Tasnim said.

"I will soon be reviewing the plan that Iran has just sent to us, but can't imagine that it would be acceptable in that they have not yet paid a big enough price for what they have



done to Humanity, and the World, over the last 47 years," Trump said on his Truth Social platform.

In a brief interview with reporters in West Palm Beach, Florida, he declined to specify what could trigger new military action against the Islamic republic.

"If they misbehave, if they do something bad, but right now, we'll see," he said. "But it's a possibility that could happen, certainly."

On Saturday, Mohammad Jafar Asadi, a senior figure in the Iranian military's central command, said "a renewed conflict between Iran and the United States is likely."

"Evidence has shown that the United States is not committed to any promises or agreements," he added, according to Fars news agency.

Deputy foreign minister Kazem Gharibabadi told diplomats in Tehran "the ball is in the United States' court to choose the path of diplomacy or the continuation of a confrontational approach."

Iran, he said, was "prepared for both paths."

Canada declares Khalistan extremists as 'national security threat'

PTI

Ottawa, May 03: Canada's intelligence agency has declared Khalistani extremists a "national security threat", adding that the group uses institutions to promote its "violent extremist agenda" in the country.

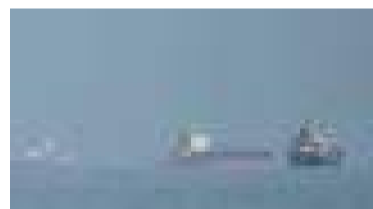
Canadian Security Intelligence Service, in its 2025 Public Report, highlighted that involvement of Canada-based Khalistani extremist (CBKE) in violent activities "continues to pose a national security threat to Canada and to Canadian interests." "Some CBKEs are well connected to Canadian citizens who leverage Canadian institutions to promote their violent extremist agenda and collect funds from unsuspecting community members that are then diverted toward violent activities," the report issued

on Canadian Government's website on Friday said. Khalistani extremist groups demand the creation of a sovereign state within India and are designated as terrorist organisations by New Delhi because of their involvement in separatist activities.

The report comes a year after the 40th anniversary of the bombing of Air India Flight 182, whose suspects were members of the CBKE groups.

"It remains to this day the deadliest terrorist attack in Canadian history, with 329 people killed, most of them Canadians," it said. The report, however, said that non-violent advocacy for the creation of a state of Khalistan is not considered extremism, and some Canadians participate in legitimate and peaceful campaigning to support the Khalistan separatist movement.

India-bound LPG tanker clears Hormuz



PTI

New Delhi, May 03: A tanker carrying liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for India has sailed out of the Strait of Hormuz and is now headed towards the country, an official statement said on Sunday.

The Marshall Islands-flagged LPG carrier MT Sarv Shakti, loaded with 46,313 tonnes of LPG and staffed by 20 crew, including 18 Indians, cleared the key shipping chokepoint on May 2 and is expected to reach Visakhapatnam on May 13, it said.

The cargo -- enough to meet half a days requirement of the country -- will partly tide over supply constraints being faced since the start of the West Asia conflict more than two months back.

Ship-tracking data showed its position in Oman Gulf on Sunday evening.

The very large gas carrier has previously made runs between the Persian Gulf and Indian ports, has been chartered by state-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC).

Sarv Shakti is the first India-linked tanker to cross the war zone since a weeks-old US blockade of ships tied to Iran began, pushing transits through Hormuz back down to almost zero.

There are as many as 14 Indian flagged or India-owned vessels still stranded on the west side of the Strait of Hormuz.

The statement said no incident involving Indian-flagged vessels has been reported in the past 24 hours. The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways is working closely with the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian missions and maritime stakeholders to ensure crew welfare and uninterrupted operations.

The Directorate General of Shipping (DG Shipping) control room has handled 8,373 calls and more than 17,965 emails since activation, including 38 calls and 127 emails in the last 24 hours.

India has also facilitated the repatriation of more than 2,953 seafarers so far, including 31 in the past day from across the Gulf region.

Port operations across the country remain normal with no congestion reported, the statement added.

Andaman sets two Guinness World Records in 2 days

Tallest underwater human stack formed

PTI

Sri Vijaya Puram, May 03: The Andaman and Nicobar Islands on Sunday created another Guinness World Record with the formation of the tallest human stack underwater at Swaraj Dweep, formerly known as Havelock Island, officials said.

Fourteen people, including Lieutenant Governor DK

Joshi, took part in forming the 22.3-metre-long stack, and they stayed under the water for three minutes, officials said.

The feat comes a day after the Union Territory administration achieved a landmark by unfurling the world's largest underwater national flag, measuring approximately 60 by 40 metres, in a coordinated operation involving multiple

agencies and trained divers near the same island.

The Lieutenant Governor, who is also the Vice Chairman of the Islands Development Agency, also participated in Saturday's event.

Officials said the back-to-back achievements are part of a larger initiative to showcase the islands as a premier global diving destination, highlighting

their pristine marine ecosystem and advanced diving capabilities.

They said the initiative has been planned in coordination with multiple departments and involved trained divers, technical experts and support teams to ensure compliance with international safety norms and Guinness World Records guidelines.

Air India board meeting on May 7; cost-saving steps, CEO selection likely on agenda



PTI

New Delhi/ Mumbai, May 03: As headwinds persist for the loss-making Air India, its board is expected to discuss cost-saving plans, selection of the next CEO, financials, and other issues during the meeting scheduled for May 7, according to sources.

Headwinds for the Air India Group, which is projected to have incurred more than Rs 22,000 crore loss in the financial year ended March 2026, have multiplied with the West Asia conflict.

In the midst of an ambitious transformation plan, the Tata Group-owned airline is also scouting for a new CEO as incumbent and

Singapore Airlines Group veteran Campbell Wilson will be stepping down later this year.

The sources said the board, chaired by Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran, will meet in Mumbai on May 7.

Various cost-saving measures, CEO succession plans, financials for 2025-26 fiscal year as well as other issues are expected to be discussed during the meeting, the sources said.

Tata Sons and Air India did not offer comments.

As part of stringent measures to save costs amid spiralling jet fuel prices, Air India is mulling unbundling meals from tickets as well as lounge access for business class travellers.

INOX SRINAGAR

NOW SCREENING

MONDAY, 4TH MAY

Raja Shivaji (U/A16+)
Hindi — 05:00 PM

BHOOTH BANGLA (U/A16+)
Hindi — 04:10 PM, 07:10 PM

Ek Din (U/A13+)
Hindi — 01:30 PM

Michael (U/A13+)
English (Subtitles) — 11:30 AM, 04:35 PM

The Devil Wears Prada 2 (A)
English (Subtitles) — 11:00 AM, 02:10 PM, 07:30 PM

Dhurandhar: The Revenge (A)
Hindi — 12:00 PM

Call 95416 13868
For assistance with tickets

LG Sinha Launches Major Campaign Against Drug Abuse And Narco-Terrorism In Srinagar

Thousands of citizens, students, officials participate in 2-km march from TRC Ground to Lal Chowk

Pics: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

