



Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan has become people's movement, setting historic records: LG Sinha

Says 3,000 calls received for tele-manas counselling, support in 31 days

Launches Community Immunization Program, Family Fortress Initiative

Waris Fayaz

Baramulla, May 12: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday said that ongoing Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan has turned into people's movement and is setting historic records.

LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) today joined the Drug-Free Jammu Kashmir campaign in Baramulla, engaging with citizens and participating in a Padyatra.

Addressing the gathering, LG Sinha said, "Fueled by public support, anti-drug campaign has turned into people's movement. It is setting historic records in Jammu Kashmir. No past social campaign has seen such massive participation."

He said, "We have received nearly 3,000 calls for tele-manas counselling and support in the past 31 days. I want our response to drugs to be rooted in



science. We don't shame diabetes patients into health or cure cancer victims through stigma. Likewise, we must treat and rehabilitate addicts with dignity, reconnecting them to society's mainstream through resolve and compassion. Government officials and citizens must unite for surveillance, rally against drugs, and foster drug-free villages and towns."

The Lieutenant Governor also announced the launch of two innovative pillars under the campaign for the next 69 days: the Community Immunization Program against drugs and the Family Fortress Initiative. "Just as we have taught communities to vaccinate against bacteria or viruses, we will partner with religious leaders and social groups to create Community Immunization initiative against drugs in 5-10 high-risk hotspot areas per district," he said, adding, "I urge | More on P6

Under PM Modi, border villages' distance from Delhi has reduced: LG Sinha

Visits Vibrant Village Uran Bowa in Baramulla

KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 12: "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, border villages' distance from Delhi has reduced. They are connected to the mainstream of development and it is commitment of the Government of India to ensure that border villages become symbol of inclusive development," Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said on Tuesday.

The LG visited Vibrant Village, Uran Bowa in Baramulla, reviewed ongoing schemes and addressed a public gathering. He said, "The people of our border villages, especially farmers, youth and women shoulder an extraordinary responsibility in serving the nation."

It is pertinent to mention that under the Vibrant Villages Programme, the Government of India has rolled out a structured initiative for inclusive development in all border villages selected under the programme. At its core are four key areas that will lay the foundation for a new era in border regions. The first is ensuring all-weather road connectivity, household electrification, telecom connectivity and television connectivity.

"I truly believe that roads unlock new possibilities. All 18 villages covered under the Vibrant Villages Programme are now linked by all-weather roads. The process to connect all 83 border villages of Baramulla has been expedited and very soon every border village of Jammu



Kashmir will be integrated into the economic mainstream and linked to other key cities of the country. Before 2019, telecom and digital coverage in those 18 strategically vital Villages was under 40%. Under the Hon'ble Prime Minister's leadership, we have ensured 100% 4G and 5G connectivity in these critical spots," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The LG assured the residents of border villages that the digital revolution won't stop at city limits and the administration is committed to strengthening digital infrastructure and delivering reliable mobile and internet services to every frontier hamlet. He also said that youth and women are being empowered and entrepreneurship is being promoted in border areas for a prosperous society.

The Lieutenant Governor reiterated that the Administration is working on three key parameters- improving literacy rate, ensuring economic growth and

providing livelihood generation opportunities for the youth of villages like Uran Bowa.

"Youth and women in border areas now have self-employment opportunities, increased education infrastructure provides vocational training for the next generation, and border tourism, new revolution in agriculture and allied sectors have ignited prosperity across all 18 vital villages," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor inaugurated and laid foundation stone for various development projects worth Rs 94 crores under different sectors and key infrastructure projects in 83 Vibrant Villages under Vibrant Villages Programme-II.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor handed over appointment orders to SPOs, computer tabs to students and sanction letters to various youth of the village and beneficiaries under HADP, Mission | More on P6

Speaker set to reconstitute House Committees for 2026-27

Term of all panels, except one, ended on March 31

KNO Special Correspondent

In a significant move, the Speaker of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly will soon reconstitute House committees, sources disclosed.

Sources told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather is expected to constitute House committees, including three financial committees, for the year

2026-27. "The constitution of the committees is expected to be finalized within the next few days," sources said, adding that the three financial committees -the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the Estimates Committee, and the Public Undertakings Committee (PUC)-will be among those to be constituted.

The terms all committees, except Committee Jal Jeevan Mission, had come to end | More on P6

NEET-UG 2026 cancelled; CBI to probe paper leak allegations

PTI

New Delhi, May 12: The National Testing Agency (NTA) on Tuesday announced the cancellation of NEET (UG) 2026 conducted on May 3, and said the examination will be re-conducted on dates to be notified separately.

The CBI will carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the allegations linked to the exam, the agency said.

In a statement, the NTA said the decision was taken in the interest of maintaining transparency and preserving trust in the national examination system.

"On the basis of inputs subsequently examined by NTA in coordination with central agencies, and the investigative findings shared by the law enforcement | More on P6

Backing Pak after Pahalgam terror attack affects reputation: India to China

'Countries attempting to shield terror infrastructure must introspect'

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, May 12: In an apparent reference to China amid reports of its support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor launched after the April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack, India on Tuesday said that countries attempting to shield terror infrastructure must introspect, as such actions have a direct bearing on their international credibility and reputation.

Responding to questions at a weekly media briefing, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, according to the news agency—Kashmir



News Observer (KNO) said, "New Delhi had seen reports confirming what was already known regarding Beijing's assistance to | More on P6

MeT forecasts rain, hailstorm, gusty winds across J&K

Advises suspending boating, shikara rides, farm operations



Sajid Raina

Srinagar, May 12: The Meteorological Department on Tuesday forecast more spells of rain and thundershowers across most parts of Jammu and Kashmir, while warning of hailstorms, lightning and gusty winds at isolated places during the next 24 hours.

According to the Meteorological Centre Srinagar, generally cloudy weather with spells of rain and thundershowers was witnessed across several areas of Kashmir and Jammu

divisions.

The MeT department informed the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that there is a possibility of hailstorms, thunder and gusty winds with speeds of 50-60 kilometres per hour at a few places in both divisions.

Authorities have advised people to suspend boating and shikara rides during the afternoon and late afternoon hours in view of the possibility of strong winds and thunderstorms.

Farmers have | More on P6

'NRPC rebukes J&K for power dues defaults'

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, May 12: In a significant regulatory rebuke, the Northern Regional Power Committee (NRPC) has revealed that Jammu & Kashmir has consistently neglected to clear deviation and reactive energy charges, payments that are mandatorily due within 10 days under the DSM Regulations.

NRPC said that the Northern Regional Load Despatch Centre (NRLDC) is operating and maintaining the 'Northern Region Pool Account' for deviation charges, Reactive Energy Charges and Congestion Charges in accordance with provisions under various CERC Regulations.

It also said that as per the regulations the payment to the statutory pool account have high priority and the concerned utilities are required to pay the indicated amounts within 10 days of issue of weekly energy account by NRPC secretariat.

"In this regard, it is submitted that J&K has not been making regular payments of Deviation Charges and Reactive Energy Charges in | More on P6

Nasha Mukht J&K

100 Days Campaign

Drug Free J&K – Every Home, Every Heart

REHABILITATION & COUNSELLING

47,703
PATIENTS TREATED AT
ADDICTION TREATMENT
FACILITIES

2,984
CALLS RECEIVED ON
TELE-MANAS

Dial the Tele MANAS helpline at

14416

for comprehensive mental health care service

Department of Information & Public Relations, J&K

DIPK-1254/26 Dated: 12/05/2026

Govts committed to merit-based opportunities: Sakeena Itoo

Distributes appointment orders among CPWs at Srinagar

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MAY 12: Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, said on Tuesday that Omar Abdullah led Government is committed to ensuring fair opportunities based on merit and transparency to the youth of Jammu and Kashmir, as well as merit-based promotions to employees for institutional growth and effective public service delivery.

The Minister, as per an official statement, stated this while distributing the appointment orders among Twenty-five Contingent Paid Workers (CPWs) of School Education department (SED) regularized as Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS), as well as promotion orders among fourteen Laboratory Assistants promoted as Teachers, at SCERT Auditorium Bemina here Tuesday.

Advisor to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani; Chairman JKBOSE, Ghulam Hassan Sheikh; Director School Education Kashmir, Naseer Ahmad Wani; Joint Director School Education Central Kashmir, Syed Shabir Ahmad; senior officers of school education department and other concerned officers were also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister reiterated the government's commitment to ensuring fair opportunities based on merit and experience. She stated that nearly 3,000 CPWs have been regularized over the past one half years, reflecting sustained efforts to provide employment security and career advancement.

The Minister highlighted that employees are the backbone of any institution and their dedication plays a vital role in achieving the larger goal of delivering quality education to students. She emphasized that transparent and merit-based promotions not



only recognize the hard work of employees but also motivate them to contribute more effectively towards institutional growth and public service delivery.

She said that several reformative measures are being undertaken to strengthen educational infrastructure, improve learning outcomes and address the genuine concerns of teaching and non-teaching staff.

Congratulating the employees, the Minister urged them to continue working with sincerity, dedication and a sense of responsibility for the betterment of the education sector and the future of students. She also assured that the government will continue to take necessary initiatives aimed at employee welfare, career progression and institutional development.

Addressing the gathering, Advisor to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani expressed satisfaction over the initiative and observed that several employees had been waiting for more than 25 to 27 years for regularization.

He stated that the government has initiated a systematic

and phased approach to resolve long-pending cases and added that similar orders have been issued in recent months in both Jammu and Srinagar.

He reiterated that the government is prioritizing the education and healthcare sectors to ensure improved public service delivery and to meet the legitimate expectations of employees.

In his welcome address, Director School Education Kashmir, Naseer Ahmad Wani highlighted the department's continued commitment to employee welfare and strengthening of education system.

Joint Director School Education Central Kashmir, Syed Shabir Ahmad delivered vote of thanks, while as Fayaz Ahmad Fayaz conducted the proceedings of the event.

Earlier, Minister Sakeena Itoo and Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani also distributed the bicycles among the meritorious students as well as students belonging to BPL families, who had excelled in exams of various classes.

DC Kulgam reviews road safety measures

Visits accident-prone Manigam crossing on NH-44

KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, MAY 12: Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, on Tuesday visited the accident-prone Manigam Crossing on National Highway-44 to assess the prevailing situation and review the remedial measures required under road safety initiatives.

During the visit, the DC took a comprehensive stock of the existing infrastructure and safety arrangements at the site.

While interacting with the residents, the DC patiently listened to their concerns regarding

the frequent road accidents at the location. The residents demanded the construction of a separate service road from Manigam Crossing to Nipora Crossing to streamline traffic movement and improve commuter safety.

The Deputy Commissioner acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and directed the concerned engineering wings to conduct a detailed feasibility study and submit a comprehensive proposal for the development of a service road along the stretch.

He also stressed the need for immediate interim safety measures, including

installation of proper signage, road markings, speed regulation mechanisms, and improved visibility arrangements to prevent further mishaps.

The Deputy Commissioner assured the public that all necessary steps would be taken on priority to minimise accident risks and ensure safer movement for commuters along the highway stretch.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent Engineer (SE) R&B, Executive Engineer (Xen) R&B, representatives from NHAI and other concerned officials accompanied the Deputy Commissioner

DC visits fire-injury victims at GMC Anantnag

KT NEWS DESK

ANANTNAG, MAY 12: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, on Tuesday visited Government Medical College (GMC), Anantnag and met the victims who sustained burn injuries during the unfortunate fire incident that occurred at a seminary located in main town during the intervening night of 11 and 12 May.

The DC was accompanied by ADC, AO GMC, Tehsildar Anantnag, MS AH GMC and other concerned officials.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, interacted with the injured and enquired about the status of their health and recovery besides the quality of treatment and health care services being provided to them. He directed the medical staff to ensure the best possible healthcare facilities and proper medical attention for the

patients so they recover soon.

On the occasion, Dr. Bilal expressed sympathy with the affected families and assured them of all possible support from the district administration. He prayed for the eternal peace of the soul of one victim who died in the tragic accident and speedy recovery of the injured persons.

In addition, the Deputy Commissioner inspected several sections of the hospital and interacted with the patients and their attendants. He enquired about the quality of healthcare services, the availability of essential medicines, and the punctuality of the medical staff. The DC emphasized that providing seamless and patient-friendly healthcare is a top priority for the district administration. He took feedback from the public regarding hospital facilities and instructed the GMC authorities to maintain high standards of patient care and ensure that no patient faces any undue inconvenience.

Central Kashmir Excise Range destroys illegal poppy cultivation at multiple locations

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MAY 12: Central Kashmir Excise Range intensified its crackdown against the illicit cultivation of narcotic crops under the Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan and destroyed illegal poppy cultivation at multiple locations across the Srinagar-Budgam-Ganderbal Excise Range in collaboration with Police, Revenue and Agriculture Departments.

During the enforcement drive, illegal poppy cultivation spread over different patches of land was identified and destroyed at various locations, including Khandah, Tehsil BK Pora in Budgam district.

Officials, as per an official statement, informed that FIRs were lodged under the relevant provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act at the concerned Police Stations. All legal formalities, seizure, sampling and on-spot destruction of the illicit crop, were completed as per procedure.

In this connection, Case, FIR No. 60/2026 under Section 8/18 of the NDPS Act, has been registered at Police Station Chadoora and investigation has been taken up.

The Excise Department reiterated its commitment towards curbing the illegal cultivation and trafficking of narcotic substances and ensuring strict enforcement of the law. The department said that such drives will continue across the region to eradicate narcotic crop cultivation and safeguard society from the menace of drug abuse.

The enforcement action was carried out under the supervision of the Excise Commissioner and Deputy Excise Commissioner (Executive), Kashmir.

DC Bandipora chairs stakeholder meeting on draft GIS-based Master Plan 2026-2046

KT NEWS DESK

BANDIPORA, MAY 12: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, chaired a stakeholder meeting on Tuesday to discuss the Draft GIS-Based Master Plan Bandipora 2026-2046 prepared by the Town Planning Organisation, Kashmir.

During the meeting, officials, as per an official statement, from the Town Planning Organisation presented the methodology for formulation of the GIS-based Master Plan and highlighted the objectives and importance of the Master Plan in addressing unplanned urban growth, infrastructure deficit, environmental concerns, population pressure and economic diversification in the district.

The meeting discussed various components of the draft plan including Local Planning Area (LPA) delineation, social and demographic profile, population projections for 2046, traffic and transportation, physical infrastructure with focus on water supply, sewerage and solid waste



management, and social infrastructure including education and health sectors.

A detailed SWOT analysis covering strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the district was also deliberated upon. The Vision 2046 framework and spatial strategy based on a polycentric and three-tier development

model were discussed in detail along with proposed land use and residential strategy for 2046.

The meeting also deliberated upon strategic road network development, identification of economic pillars including proposed IT/AI Park, agro-processing and medical sectors, and promotion of sustainable tourism in the district.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PW (R&B) DIVISION ZAINPORA

e-mail:- randb-zainapora@jk.gov.in

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

SINGLE COVER SYSTEM (up to Rs. 2.50 Crores)

NIT No: 13/ZNP/RnB/e-Tendering/2026-27

Dated: 12-05-2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

| S. No | Name of Work | Major Head Of Account | Advertised cost (in Lacs) | Earnest Money Deposit (Rs.) | Class of Contractor | Time of Completion | Cost of T/ Doc(Rs.) | Technical sanction No. & Date |
|-------|--|---|--|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--|
| 1 | Restoration of Turkawan-gam Bridge BWO Construction of RCC Cutoff Wall, laying of Gabions and river training work. | UT Capex Budget (Bridge Sector) 2025-26 (Flood Damaged Works) | Advertised Cost excl. GST: 32.973 Advertised Cost incl. GST: 38.908 | 77816/- | AAV/BEE | 30 Days | 1100/- | 14/TS/UT Capex(- Flood) of 2026-27 Dated: 11-05-2026 |

Position of funds: - Committed
Project Authority: PW(R&B) Department Kashmir
AAA No. Date: 22-SE/PS of 2026 Dated: - 09-05-2026

The Payment shall be made strictly as per the release of funds by the Competent authority.

1. The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

| | | |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | Date of Issue of Tender Notice | 12-05-2026 |
| 2 | Document downloading Start Date. | 12-05-2026 |
| 3 | Document Downloading End Date. | 20-05-2026 |
| 4 | Bid submission Start Date. | 12-05-2026 |
| 5 | Bid Submission End Date. | 20-05-2026 |
| 6 | Date & time of opening of Bids (Online) | 21-05-2026 at 01.00 P.M |

Bids must be accompanied by a Treasury Challan (dated between the bid start date and the Bid Submission End date) deposited in M.H. 0059 PWD in the name of Executive Engineer R&B Division Zainpora (tender inviting authority) as the cost of the tender document.

Note:- The Date of Treasury Challan must be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date. Any deviation shall render the bidder as Non-responsive.

1.1 At the time of tendering, all bidders must upload earnest money/bid security equal to 2% of the Advertised Cost in the form of CDR/FDR/BC pledged to the tender receiving authority, i.e. Executive Engineer R&B Division Zainpora. The successful bidder will have to provide Performance Security @ 5% at the time of contract award, strictly in accordance with the Government's circular instructions from time to time. The earnest money/bid security of 2% will be released to the successful bidder only after the submission of a Performance Security of 5% of the Bid Cost, which will be released after successful completion of the DLP/Maintenance Period beyond 60 Days.

1.2 Unbalanced Bid:
The successful bidder L1 shall have to deposit an additional performance security in the shape of CDR / FDR/ B.G before award of contract in case the bid of the successful bidder is found to be unbalanced and the following scale shall apply there to:-

1.2.1 Where the bid price is below 10% but not below 20% of the project cost put to bid, the additional performance guarantee/security percentage shall be incremented by 0.1% for every percentage of bid price below 10% of the project cost put to bid starting at 11% with the additional bid performance guarantee being 0.1% and this additional performance guarantee percentage shall be applied on the bid price.

1.2.2 Where the bid price is 20% or more below of the project cost put to bid, the additional performance guarantee percentage shall be incremented by 0.2% for every percentage of bid price below 20% of the project cost put to bid in addition to 1% of the bid price and this additional performance guarantee Percentage shall be applied on the bid price.

1.2.3 The additional performance guarantee percentage shall be rounded off to the next lower percentage based on whether the decimal point of the percentage of bid price is below 0.5% or next higher percentage based on whether the decimal point of the percentage of bid price is 0.5% or more.

1.2.4 The additional performance security shall be treated as part of the performance security. Additional performance security shall be taken only after approval of next higher authority.

1 Bidders are advised to quote Rates without GST. GST @ 18% shall be added at the time of allotment by allotting authority

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

3 The earnest money shall be forfeited if:-

a) Any bidder/ tenderer withdraws his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.

b) Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.

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

d) The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on website www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the Bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of responsive bidders shall be opened online on website in the office of the Executive Engineer R&B Division Zainpora (Tender receiving authority).

NOTE: The "sum in dispute" shall refer to the aggregate of all the disputed amounts, both the claim(s) amount plus the counter claim(s) amount.

32. The tender/bid is liable to rejection if it does not fulfill the requirements as laid down in NIT.

33. Any typographical error if found in the BOQ/BOQs/NIT will be rectified as per original estimate/DPR/SSR/GCC whichever is appropriate and will be paid accordingly.

No: R&B/ZNP/DIV/NIT/12-21

Dt: 12-05-2026

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL & HOSPITAL DIVISION, SRINAGAR (Erstwhile Mechanical Hospital & Central Heating Division Srinagar)

Contact No: 0194-2496089, Email Id: exen-mechospgr@jk.gov.in,

Sub:- Comprehensive Maintenance Contract of 1000 LPM oxygen Plant Oxywise Make installed at Govt. 500 Bedded Hospital Srinagar

Ref: - This office NIT No: M&HDS/TS /2026-27/06/e-tendering, Dated: -02.05.2026

EXTENSION 01

In view of Poor response, the critical dates of above subject work tendered vide above referred e-NIT are extended as follows:

| S.No | Description | Date and Time |
|------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. | Last Date of Bid Submission | 16.05.2026 (18:00 hrs) |
| 2. | Date of Bid Opening | 16.05.2026 (15:00 hrs) |

All other Terms and Conditions of the NIT shall remain the same.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
M&HD, Srinagar

DIPK-1238/26

No: M&HDS/TS/ 735-38

DATED: 12-05-2026

Date: 12.05.2026

DIPK-1237/26

DATED: 12-05-2026

Sd/-
(Er. H.M Jahangir)
Executive Engineer
R&B Division Zainpora

CS reviews PM-JAY SEHAT implementation

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 12: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Tuesday chaired the Governing Council Meeting of the State Health Agency (SHA), during which a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) and AB PM-JAY SEHAT scheme across Jammu and Kashmir was undertaken.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Finance; Commissioner Secretary, Health and Medical Education Department; Commissioner Secretary, Planning; Secretary, Information Technology; Director, SKIMS; Principal, Government Medical College, Srinagar/Jammu besides other concerned officers.

During the meeting, Chief Executive Officer, State Health Agency, Ananth Dwivedi, delivered a detailed presentation highlighting the achievements registered under the scheme, its financial performance during the current policy period and the proposed modalities for ensuring its continued and sustainable implementation across the Union Territory in the months to come.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Secretary observed that Jammu and Kashmir has emerged as one of the leading regions in extending universal healthcare coverage under the PM-JAY SEHAT scheme, significantly improving access to quality and



cashless healthcare services for the people.

He remarked that the scheme has enabled lakhs of beneficiaries, particularly from economically weaker and vulnerable sections of society, to avail specialized treatment free of cost in both public and empanelled private healthcare institutions, thereby providing substantial economic relief along with quality medical care.

Emphasizing the importance of the scheme in protecting households against catastrophic healthcare expenditure, the Chief Secretary stressed the need for maintaining transparency, ensuring timely settlement of claims and strengthening monitoring mechanisms.

He called for sustained efforts to further reinforce public healthcare institutions, improve beneficiary outreach and ensure seamless delivery of healthcare

services under the PM-JAY SEHAT framework.

The presentation revealed that during the current Policy Period-8, spanning from April 17, 2025 to April 16, 2026, more than 4.08 lakh pre-authorizations were approved under the scheme involving a financial outgo of nearly Rs 775 Cr. It was informed that over 3.86 lakh claims were submitted under the programme, reflecting the extensive utilization of healthcare services by beneficiaries across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Governing Council was also apprised that public sector hospitals continue to play a dominant role in implementation of the scheme, accounting for a major share of treatments and financial transactions. It was added that more than Rs 515 Cr worth of pre-authorizations were approved in public hospitals during the ongoing policy period,

demonstrating the growing capacity and strengthening of government healthcare institutions in delivering advanced treatment under the flagship healthcare programme.

While reviewing the future roadmap, the Chief Secretary was informed about various reforms and financial restructuring measures being contemplated for the upcoming Policy Period-9 to ensure long-term sustainability of the scheme without compromising the quality of healthcare services being extended to the people.

The presentation further outlined comparative projections between Insurance Mode and Trust Mode for implementation of the scheme. It was informed that under the Trust Mode, based on present expenditure trends, the expected annual expenditure is projected to remain

substantially manageable while ensuring uninterrupted healthcare coverage to all eligible beneficiaries.

The Governing Council was also informed that certain changes approved in the Health Benefit Package by the competent authority are expected to rationalize expenditure and improve operational efficiency during the next policy cycle. The proposed measures include optimization of package rates in select specialties while safeguarding critical and high-end healthcare services.

The meeting concluded with detailed deliberations on future strategies aimed at preserving the gains achieved under PM-JAY SEHAT while making the scheme financially sustainable, more efficient and increasingly responsive to the healthcare needs of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Region moving towards fuel, gas crisis: Dr Farooq

REHAN QAYOUM MIR

Srinagar, May 12: National Conference President Dr Farooq Abdullah on Tuesday warned that the region was moving towards a fuel and gas crisis, saying it could push the economy into "distress and uncertainty."

Speaking to reporters in Srinagar, Dr Farooq said global tensions and ongoing geopolitical conflicts could further worsen the situation.

"We are going towards a crisis, a fuel crisis, a gas crisis and heading towards destruction," he said, adding that if the situation



persists, it is difficult to predict the consequences for the economy." He also said there was a need to

find a way out, warning that continued uncertainty could have severe implications—(KNO)

Alcohol remarks misconstrued, Govt not supporting it: Javed Dar



WARIS FAYAZ

Baramulla, May 12: Cabinet Minister Javed Ahmad Dar on Tuesday clarified that the government is not supporting alcohol consumption and said recent remarks on the issue were being misconstrued.

Talking to reporters here, Minister Dar maintained that an alcohol ban is desired in the Union Territory. "The government's stand on alcohol remains clear and efforts are underway to address the issue," he said. "Statements are being misled. We are not supporting alcohol consumption. We want it to get banned," the Minister said.

He said alcohol is prohibited in Islam and stressed that Jammu and Kashmir, being

a Muslim majority region, should work towards distancing society from alcohol consumption.

"Alcohol is prohibited in Islam, but we are in a Union Territory and cannot directly take decisions on few of the issues," he said.

The Minister said discussions are underway, but added that the government does not want to disclose details at this stage.

Reiterating the government's position, the Minister said they are not in favour of alcohol and are exploring ways to curb its use in Jammu and Kashmir.

"We should find ways to get rid of it and stay away from it," he added.

On ongoing "Nasha Mukht Abhiyan", he said the initiative is gaining momentum across the Union Territory and stressed that collective public participation is essential to eradicate the drug menace from society.

The Minister said the anti-drug campaign has turned into a common cause and expressed hope that sustained efforts by the administration, police, health institutions and the public would yield positive results.

He said the government is focusing on rehabilitation of drug victims and treating addiction as a medical condition rather than a social stigma—(KNO)

LoP Sharma attends swearing-in ceremony of Assam CM



KNO

Srinagar, May 12: Leader of Opposition Sunil Kumar Sharma on Tuesday attended the swearing-in ceremony of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati.

According to the new agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Sunil Kumar Sharma was present at the oath-taking ceremony.

Sharma, who served as co-in-charge of the BJP for the Assam elections, had spent considerable time devising strategy and campaigning for the party in the state. He also played a crucial role in securing eight additional votes for the BJP in the Rajya Sabha elections held in J&K in October 2025—(KNO)

Info Deptt condole demise of wife of Iqbal Ahmad

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 12: Joint Directorate of Information Kashmir on Tuesday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of the wife of Mohammad Iqbal Hajam, Multi Tasking Staff (MTS) in the department, who passed away after a brief illness.

In a condolence message, officers and officials of the department conveyed heartfelt sympathies and condolences to Iqbal Ahmad and his bereaved family during this difficult hour.

They prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul and for strength and patience to the bereaved family to bear the irreparable loss.

MLA urges LG Sinha to enhance compensation for Pak shelling victims in Uri

WARIS FAYAZ

Uri, May 12: Stating that the border population had suffered heavily during the difficult periods, MLA Uri Sajad Shafi on Tuesday urged Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to enhance compensation for families whose houses were damaged in Pakistan shelling last year.

Addressing the Lieutenant Governor during his visit to Uranbua in Baramulla, MLA said at least 500 houses were damaged in Uri in Pakistan shelling, while over 100 structures were completely destroyed.

"Border villages have always suffered and last year's shelling from across LoC was one of the toughest periods wherein people faced a lot of hardships. The compensation given to those whose houses were damaged was very low. I urge you to look into it and enhance the compensation amount," the MLA

told LG Sinha.

MLA Shafi also sought a special police recruitment drive for Uri, saying the youth of the border area have always served and sacrificed for the country and the region.

"This is a borderline area and special police recruitments were happening here earlier. I, on behalf of the people of Uri, urge for such a special recruitment drive again as the Home Department comes under you," he said.

He demanded ST2 status for Uri sub division, citing its topography and ethnic characteristics. He referred to similar provisions extended to areas like Rajouri, Poonch and Tangdhar.

Responding to the demand, the Lieutenant Governor said the proposal would be looked into.

Uri MLA also thanked the Lieutenant Governor for standing with the people of Uri during difficult times and prioritising the border area during challenges—(KNO)

86 percent qualify 11th exams in Jammu

REHAAN QAYOUM MIR

Srinagar, May 12: The Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) Tuesday announced annual regular results of 11th standard in summer zone areas of Jammu division with at least 86 percent qualifying the exams.

JKBOSE has informed that a total of 85.83 percent of students

qualify the exams. The board official also said that the pass percentage of girls is 89 percent and 83 percent among the male students.

It also said that 43,950 students appeared in the exams out of which 37,726 successfully qualified the exams.

Earlier on April-22, JKBOSE announced annual regular results of 12th standard in summer zone

areas of Jammu division with at least 89 percent qualifying the exams.

JKBOSE has informed that a total of 89.80 percent students qualify the exams.

It had also said that there has been a notable improvement in 12th class results in comparison pass percentage of previous year that stood at 75.95 percent—(KNO)

EOW registers 3 cases against serial job fraudster

KNO

Srinagar, May 12: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) Kashmir has registered three cases against a Kupwara man for allegedly duping several people on the pretext of providing government jobs, officials said on Monday.

In a statement, a spokesperson said the Economic Offences Wing Kashmir of Crime Branch J&K has registered three separate cases against accused Abdul Majeed Mir S/o Abdul Rahim Mir R/o Lastiyal Kalaroo, Kupwara for allegedly cheating several persons on the pretext of providing government jobs in different departments and financial institutions. He said preliminary investigations

conducted by this investigation agency revealed that the accused had collected huge amounts of money from victims by falsely assuring them of government employment.

"The accused had prepared and supplied fake and forged appointment orders purportedly issued by government agencies and J&K Bank in order to deceive the victims and gain their trust. The acts committed by the accused prima facie attract offences punishable under relevant sections of the Ranbir Penal Code (RPC), the erstwhile Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)," said the spokesperson.

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

SKIMS to fill 1200 paramedical posts: Prof Ganie

JAHANGEER GANIE

Srinagar, May 12: Director SKIMS Prof. M. Ashraf Ganie on Tuesday said that nearly 1,200 paramedical posts across different cadres are under consideration for recruitment, including around 500 positions for nursing staff.

Addressing the International Nurses Day celebrations at SKIMS here, Professor Ganie said, "Proposed recruitment process is expected to substantially reduce the shortage of nursing staff at SKIMS within the next three months."

He stated that the move would help bridge nearly 60 percent of the existing deficiency in nursing manpower at the premier healthcare institution.

He expressed gratitude to all stakeholders, including the Lieutenant Governor and Chief Minister's administrations, for facilitating the recruitment process and supporting

efforts aimed at strengthening healthcare services in Jammu and Kashmir. The Director said enhancing the workforce would significantly improve patient care management and reinforce the spirit of this year's International Nurses Day theme, "Our Nurses, Our Future: Empowered Nurses Save Lives."

In another important announcement, Prof. Ganie said SKIMS is also working on introducing a paid nursing internship programme aimed at empowering young nursing professionals and equipping them with valuable clinical exposure and practical experience.

Reaffirming his commitment towards the expansion and modernization of SKIMS, Prof. Ganie said new departments would be established while existing facilities would be upgraded to meet the growing healthcare demands of the region.

He described nurses as the true pillars of the healthcare system and



acknowledged their immense contribution towards patient care. "The word nurse is synonymous with motherhood in terms of compassion, empathy and selfless service," he said. Highlighting the emerging social challenges in Kashmir, the Director also stressed that healthcare workers, especially nurses, can play a vital role in combating the growing drug menace through counselling, awareness, rehabilitation support,

and compassionate care.

Dean Medical Faculty SKIMS, Prof. Bashir Ahmad Fomda, said the theme of the event reflected the roadmap for the growth and empowerment of the nursing fraternity. He emphasized the need for structural support, clinical autonomy, adequate workspace, and greater participation of nurses in decision-making processes.

Additional Director SKIMS, Zahoor Ahmad Mir, congratulated the nursing staff and appreciated their tireless service and unwavering commitment towards patient care despite numerous challenges.

Incharge Principal of Madre Meharban College of Nursing SKIMS, Prof. Maqbool, observed that the increasing participation of men in the nursing profession reflects a positive societal change. However, he noted that women continue to remain closely associated with compassion and caregiving. He also thanked the SKIMS administration for extending

support towards addressing issues related to the nursing faculty.

Medical Superintendent SKIMS, Prof. Farooq Ahmad Jan, termed nurses the backbone of patient care and said the global recognition earned by SKIMS was largely due to the dedication, professionalism, and commitment of its nursing workforce.

Medical Superintendents of SKIMS State Cancer Hospital and the Maternity Hospital also addressed the gathering and appreciated nurses for their tireless service and commitment towards patients.

Incharge Nursing Administration Mrs. Shafieqa and Organising Secretary Mrs. Shameema Khan highlighted the pivotal role played by nurses in the healthcare system while paying tribute to Florence Nightingale. They also thanked the administration and organising committee for making the event successful—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

The Time For Youth Has Arrived

The time has come for young people. For too long, youth have been told to wait. Wait for opportunities. Wait for permission to lead. Wait for someone else to clear the path. Waiting is over. The time to rise, shine and conquer is now. History was never made by those who waited for permission to be extraordinary. This is a simple truth, but an important one. Every great achievement,

every scientific breakthrough, every social transformation was led by young people who refused to accept the world as it was. They saw problems and solved them. They saw injustice and fought it. They saw empty spaces and filled them with ideas. Our youth today have the same potential. They only need two things: opportunities and faith in themselves. Governance cannot thrive without the voice of

its youth. Inclusive governance means giving young people a real stake in every key sector. Every young boy and girl must realise: your talent matters. Your voice matters. Your ideas can shape the future. Culture is our identity. When young people express themselves through music, art, literature, dance, theatre, sports and crafts, they are channelling the soul of India itself. The youth do not need to copy

others to succeed. The world does not need duplicates. It needs unique individuals who do not just shine for themselves but light the way for those who come after. Victory is not about dominating others. It is about conquering apathy, overcoming inequality and defeating despair. The greatest triumphs of humanity were not won on battlefields. They emerged from classrooms and laboratories. They were

achieved by young trailblazers who refused to accept the world as they found it and transformed it through resolve and grit. Our youth must now rise. They must conquer the fear of bold experiments. They must resolve to build a strong, empathetic and developed India. The time for youth has arrived. The answer lies in every young heart that dares to dream and every young hand that dares to act.

206 Seats, 49 Years, And One Verdict: Bengal Has Chosen

Peace, prosperity, stability—and an administration that does not collect a cut for letting her live. The voter has asked for it, and Bengal has voted.



Hardeep Singh Puri

Howrah was once called the Sheffield of Asia. The jute mills along the Hooghly were the largest concentration of organised industry on the subcontinent. Kolkata was India's commercial capital, head office to the Birlas and the Tatas, to ITC, Britannia, Coal India, Hindustan Motors, Garden Reach Shipbuilders, IISCO at Burnpur dates to 1918, Durgapur Steel Plant to the Second Plan. In 1950-51, Bengal produced roughly 27 per cent of the country's manufacturing output. I knew that Calcutta. Before I joined the Foreign Service, one of my first jobs was at Hindustan Lever in the city, and Calcutta then was still a place where a young man arriving with his trunks could be sure he had come to where the country's commerce was conducted. The lights stayed on. The trams ran. The companies hired. What had taken a century to build was dismantled by something more deliberate than economic mismanagement. The Left Front took office in 1977 and held it for thirty-four years. Beneath the rhetoric of the working class, an organised shadow state took root. Permission to build, to run a shop, to set up a kiln, to register a transport route, to hold a panchayat meeting, came with a cut. The cadre collected. The party banked. The unionism that drove out capital was the visible part. The extortion that drove out the citizen was the part the cameras did not

film. By the 2000s, when the Left Front itself attempted to reverse course and bring Tata Motors to Singur, the Trinamool Congress in opposition staged a hunger strike that drove the project to Gujarat in 2008. The mafia changed colours; it did not dissolve. The Trinamool Congress took power in 2011 on the promise of poriborton. What followed was the same machinery in a new uniform. The cut became cut-money. The cadre became syndicate. Bengal's 27 per cent share of national manufacturing has fallen below 5 per cent. Per capita income, once 127 per cent of the national average, has slipped to 84. More than six thousand registered companies have moved their head offices out of Kolkata. The children of Bengal who would once have worked in Howrah or Salt Lake now live in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Pune. The voter who watched her jobs and her money walk out of the state had a score to settle, and a ballot in her hand to settle it with. At the centre of the score was a record on women that no incumbent in independent India has had to defend. A woman Chief Minister presided over the torture and killing of the women of her state. The rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor at the RG Kar Medical College in August 2024. The night-long vandalism at the crime scene by a mob the Kolkata Police chose not to disperse. The Calcutta High Court's order transferring the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation, on the finding that the Kolkata Police's enquiry did not inspire confidence. The forty-two-day strike by junior doctors, many of them women. Sandeshkhali, January 2024. The women of an island in the Sundarbans came out into the streets against a Trinamool district council member who remained a fugitive for fifty-five days while the State Police filed nothing. A Chief Minister whose own movement once spoke of poriborton has presided over a

regime in which the women of her state had to seek refuge in courts, in central agencies, and on the streets, against her own cadre. It is reprehensible. It is unconscionable. What the women of Bengal had to endure was matched only by what the state's young people had to give up. Twenty-one crore rupees in cash, recovered from a single locked flat in Salt Lake on the night of the first Enforcement Directorate raid. Further recoveries on associated properties pushed the total past fifty crore. The arrest of the sitting cabinet minister Partha Chatterjee, who as Education Minister had presided over the West Bengal School Service Commission. The Calcutta High Court cancelling, in April 2024, the appointments of twenty-five thousand seven hundred and fifty-three teachers, Group-C and Group-D staff under a recruitment found illegal at the gate. A ruling carried to the Supreme Court and upheld in 2025. An entire school recruitment cycle meant to give Bengal's young people a foothold in life turned into a counter at which posts were sold and the legitimate candidate could not see the queue. Layered above that scam was the ration scam that pulled in another sitting cabinet minister, Jyotipriya Mallick. Layered above, the cattle scam, the cut-money culture, the syndicate raj. The voter understood the connecting tissue. The first to suffer in a state run by a mafia is the citizen who refuses to pay the bribe. Against this record stood a record of another kind. Four crore twenty-one lakh houses completed under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana over the past decade. Fifteen crore tap-water connections under Jal Jeevan Mission, against a base of three crore in 2019. Ayushman Bharat covering approximately fifty-five crore beneficiaries with a five lakh rupee annual cover. Direct Benefit Transfer rendering obsolete the leakage that once defined every welfare programme in Bengal. None of these are abstractions. They were

the floor on which every Bharatiya Janata Party karyakarta in Bengal stood when she asked for the vote. Behind that floor stood a network. The party's booth-level cadre, the panna pramukhs, the karyakartas who endured intimidation, threats, and physical violence across electoral cycles, did the unglamorous work of registration, transport, and turnout in conditions other parties had abandoned. The threats against the Prime Minister and the Home Minister, the declarations of what would follow once central forces left, the lives lost in earlier rounds of post-poll violence, were not rhetoric the karyakarta had to be reminded of. She had lived through it. The Honourable Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah, walked Bengal himself, district by district, sometimes returning to the same town within weeks, knowing what his cadre was carrying. What they were attempting was not an electoral upset. It was the breaking of a citadel. The faces of this breakthrough tell their own story. Smt Ratna Debnath, the mother of the RG Kar victim, fielded by the Bharatiya Janata Party in Panihati and leading by margins that demolished a fifteen-year Trinamool stronghold. Smt Rekha Patra, who stood on her own soil at Sandeshkhali to demand what the state had refused her, and who carried that demand to a contest in Hingaljan. Voters of districts that had been left for thirty years and Trinamool for fifteen, turning to the lotus for the first time. On Sunday, 4 May 2026, Bengal settled the score. The Bharatiya Janata Party won 206 of 293 declared seats. Forty-nine years of mafia rule, in two successive uniforms, have ended. This was not only an electoral verdict. It was a moral one. The breakthrough is already being contested. The Special Intensive Revision of the electoral rolls, which removed ninety lakh ineligible names from a state where ineligibility had been allowed to accumulate for

15 years, is being characterised by the losing side as voter suppression. The data settles the question. Of the twenty constituencies that saw the highest deletions during adjudication, the Trinamool Congress won thirteen. Samserganj, Lalgola, Bhagabangola, Raghunathganj and Metiaburuz, the five with the most deletions, all returned a Trinamool MLA in both 2021 and 2026. Of the forty-nine constituencies in which the winning margin was lower than the number of electors removed during the revision, twenty-six were won by the Bharatiya Janata Party, twenty-one by the Trinamool Congress, and two by the Congress. A targeted exclusion does not produce a near-even split between the winning party and the losing one. The 92.93 per cent voter turnout, the highest in the state's history, settled the question of whether the rolls were credible. By disputing the verdict, the voter has already delivered, the losing party only confirms the dadagiri the voter rejected, and the wisdom of the choice she made. Bengal has voted, and Bengal has chosen. What the voter has asked for is not difficult to read. Peace, and freedom from the violence that has shadowed her streets. Prosperity, and the return of work to the city she lives in. Stability, and an administration that does not collect a cut for letting her live. A cultural and economic renaissance in the state that gave the country its first industrial belt, its commercial capital, and the early architects of national administration. The Calcutta 1 worked in is recoverable. Bengal is ready to resume its contribution to a Viksit Bharat by 2047. Behind every welfare delivery and infrastructure decision of the past decade has been a Prime Minister who treats the citizen as the unit of account. The reward for keeping faith with that citizen has now been recorded. The author is Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas

India's New Globalization Raj

India's openness has acquired strategic significance. What once looked like a domestic reform agenda has become a global opportunity.



Shashi Tharoor

The Indian market's metamorphosis from a sequestered fortress into a vanguard of global trade is perhaps the most significant structural shift of the 21st-century world economy. The country has pivoted from a closed, defensive economic posture to an outward-looking, globally assertive stance. A hesitant participant in globalization has become an increasingly confident force shaping global supply chains. For decades, the Indian market was defined by the "license-permit-quota raj," a stifling apparatus of bureaucratic red tape and formidable tariff walls designed to insulate domestic industries from the perceived predations of foreign capital. Throughout much of the post-independence period, India's economic strategy was built on self-sufficiency, import substitution (the domestic production of goods that could be purchased from others) and a deep suspicion of global markets. Although this approach produced pockets

of industrial capacity, it ultimately led to chronic inefficiencies, technological stagnation and a persistent gap between India's economic potential and its performance, resulting in what the economist Raj Krishna called a "Hindu rate of growth." The economy persistently struggled to keep pace with the country's demographic growth and expanding needs. Then came economic liberalization in 1991, marking the beginning of India's metamorphosis. What started as a crisis-driven necessity gradually matured into a structural reorientation. India went from protecting itself against the global economy to participating in it and finally to competing within it. This shift was as much psychological as it was economic. To embrace the possibilities of openness, India had to shed its anxieties and sense of vulnerability. Over time, its integration into global trade, capital flows and technology networks reshaped its growth trajectory, urbanization patterns and entrepreneurial culture. But the story does not end there. The India of 2026 has broken its remaining shackles to become the world's most open and liberalized major emerging economy. This transformation was born of a fundamental insight: true economic sovereignty in a digitized world lies not in isolation but in integration. While the initial reforms of 1991 cracked the door open, India has spent the past several years removing the hinges entirely.

Now, India is no longer a peripheral player but a central node in global economic flows. Its services exports, digital capabilities and manufacturing ambitions have positioned it as a country whose economic choices reverberate far beyond its borders. Within multilateral fora, India has signed landmark comprehensive economic partnership agreements with the UAE, Oman, Australia, the UK and the EU. Moreover, both New Zealand and the US have announced agreements in principle. These are not mere tariff-slashing exercises. They are designed to drive deeper integration by aligning regulatory standards, facilitating the seamless movement of professionals and securing India's place within the high-tech global value chains that define modern manufacturing. This shift is underpinned by a nuanced reinterpretation of the Indian government's mantra of "atmanirbharta," or self-reliance. Indian leaders now understand that this is achieved through global engagement, not autarky. By leveraging production-linked incentive schemes, the government has encouraged global titans in electronics, semiconductors and green energy to treat the subcontinent not just as a captive market but as a primary export hub. It has even eased rules for foreign direct investment in sensitive sectors like defense and space exploration. India no longer fears foreign capital and is eagerly competing for it as the world's

primary alternative to East Asia's traditional manufacturing clusters. India's economic liberalization will have profound implications. As the "China Plus One" strategy — driven by geopolitical tensions, supply chain vulnerabilities and the desire to diversify risk — becomes the standard for multinationals' corporate planning, India stands out as an ideal partner: stable, democratic and increasingly deregulated. Thus, India's openness has acquired strategic significance. What once looked like a domestic reform agenda has become a global opportunity. The synergy between its burgeoning digital public infrastructure and its new trade agreements suggests a future where India does not just export goods but also exports much of the world's digital architecture. By lowering the cost of imported inputs through trade deals, India is systematically enhancing its own exports' competitiveness, creating a virtuous cycle of growth that can propel it toward becoming a developed economy by mid-century. The combination of a large, stable democracy, a young workforce, improving infrastructure and a regulatory environment that is moving toward greater transparency and predictability makes India not merely an alternative to China but a complementary anchor in a multipolar supply chain architecture. The country's manufacturing push through initiatives like production-linked

incentive schemes, its digital public infrastructure and its expanding logistics networks all reinforce this positioning. But the path to becoming the world's most liberalized economy is not without friction. The challenge lies in ensuring that the "last mile" of reform — addressing high land, labor and logistics costs and maintaining regulatory predictability — matches the ambition of the high-level trade agreements India has signed. The transition from a protectionist mindset to a liberal one requires a continuous balancing act between protecting vulnerable agrarian livelihoods and embracing the creative destruction of global competition. Nonetheless, the momentum is undeniable. India's economic strategy has moved decisively from defensive insulation to strategic integration. It has shifted from fearing global competition to leveraging it; from resisting foreign capital to courting it; from protecting domestic inefficiencies to building global competitiveness; and from being shaped by globalization to helping define its next phase. The direction of travel is unmistakable. India is no longer a bystander in the global order but a primary architect of its future. Shashi Tharoor is a Member Parliament (MP), Lok Sabha, the former UN undersecretary-general and former Indian minister of state for external affairs. X: @ShashiTharoor Source: Project Syndicate

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

2ND Tranche Limestone Auction' 212 mineral blocks auctioned, 36 operationalised in one Year: Union Secretary Mines Piyush Goyal

Says 12 limestone blocks across Anantnag, Rajouri and Poonch opened for bidding in Srinagar

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, May 12: Asserting that the Union Government is committed to unlocking Jammu and Kashmir's mineral potential and accelerating industrial growth in the Union Territory, Secretary, Ministry of Mines, Government of India, Piyush Goyal on Tuesday said the Centre has launched the second tranche of e-auction of 12 limestone blocks in the Union Territory to promote transparent, sustainable and investor-friendly mining.

Speaking during the inaugural session of the launch of the second tranche of limestone block auctions in Srinagar, Goyal, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO)—said, "The initiative aims to fast-track mineral development in J&K through a structured auction process, ensuring wider participation, transparency and efficient utilisation of limestone resources across key districts of the Union Territory."

He said several of the identified blocks possess substantial limestone reserves and are expected to attract strong participation from cement and infrastructure sectors.

"Today, we have started the auction process of the second tranche of 12 limestone blocks in Jammu and Kashmir. Many of these blocks are large and



resource-rich. We are hopeful that the process will see strong participation and successful outcomes," he said.

Goyal said the Government of India is giving special focus to Jammu and Kashmir's development and has initiated the auction process in coordination with the Union Territory administration to ensure fair participation, transparency and faster mineral-led growth.

"We are briefing bidders about the entire process and all block-related details to ensure transparency and smooth participation," he added.

The Secretary said the Ministry of Mines has undertaken several reforms and amendments in recent years to simplify procedures, strengthen transparency and improve ease of doing business in the mining sector.

Highlighting national performance, he said India achieved a record 212 mineral blocks auctioned during 2025–26, compared to around 100 blocks annually in earlier years, marking a significant jump in mining reforms and sectoral expansion.

He said operationalisation of mines has also improved significantly. "From 2015 to 2024, only 58 mineral blocks became operational in ten years. But in 2025–26 alone, 36 blocks were operationalised in a year," he said.

Goyal said that a major shift towards greenfield mining has been recorded. "Out of the earlier 58 operationalised blocks, only 20 were greenfield mining projects. But out of the 36 operationalised this year, 28 are greenfield blocks," he said.

On production trends, he said India recorded nearly 8

percent growth in limestone and iron ore production, while the overall mining sector registered around 5.5 percent growth, despite global economic uncertainties.

The Secretary also highlighted the Centre's focus on critical minerals including lithium, cobalt, nickel, graphite and vanadium, calling them essential for green energy transition and strategic sectors.

"In the last two years, 46 auctions of critical mineral blocks have been conducted successfully and 19 blocks are currently under auction," he said.

On environmental safeguards, he said sustainable mining remains a top priority and stressed that environmental clearance norms must be strictly followed. "There is no question of environmental degradation. Environmental clearance conditions must be followed in letter and spirit," he said.

He said the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) has introduced a star-rating system to promote sustainable mining practices.

"A minimum three-star rating is mandatory for mines. If a mine fails to achieve it within three years, it faces closure. We are encouraging mines to move towards five-star and seven-star standards," he added.

Addressing concerns over illegal mining, he stressed the

need for technology-driven monitoring systems. "If technology is properly used, illegal mining can be controlled completely," he said.

He cited deployment of drone surveys, RFID-based gate passes and real-time XRF-based mineral analysis systems as key tools being used to curb illegal extraction and improve transparency.

Officials informed that the 12 limestone blocks are spread across Anantnag, Rajouri and Poonch districts, including both newly identified and second-attempt blocks under Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015.

The first-attempt category includes Kalindange, Naubugh-Halan and Sop blocks in Anantnag, besides Dharamora and Faislabad in Poonch.

The second-attempt category includes Dooru Shahabad, Koot-Kapran and Wantrag in Anantnag, Rajpura in Poonch, and Darhal-Chittibatti, Khablian-Bharot-Danna and Lah Limestone Block-E in Rajouri.

Officials said the blocks fall under G3 and G4 UNFC stages and are expected to attract strong industrial interest.

The auction is being conducted under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act) and Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015 (as amended). (KNO)

DC Srinagar assesses implementation of Mission YUVA scheme

Directs prompt disposal of pending cases, expeditious loan disbursement to eligible entrepreneurs

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR MAY 12: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Tuesday chaired a comprehensive review meeting at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex to assess the implementation and progress of Mission YUVA scheme in the District.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner, Rifat Aftab, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Aadil Fareed, IAS Probationer, Alfred Thomas, General Manager DIC, Abid Hussain, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, SDM West, Irfan Bahadur, SDM East, Zubair Ahmad, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar, Deputy Director Employment, Shubi Tabasum, Zonal Head Jammu and Kashmir Bank, LDM (Banks), Officers of all line Departments and various branch heads of J&K Bank.

At the outset, the DC took a detailed review of applications at various stages under the scheme, including registration, verification, approval, sanction and loan disbursement.

Emphasizing the importance of the scheme, the DC stated that Mission YUVA is aimed at empowering youth

and fostering a robust entrepreneurship ecosystem by providing financial assistance, mentorship and institutional support to them. He underscored the need for close coordination among implementing agencies, financial institutions and line departments to ensure effective ground-level execution. He stressed the need for expeditious processing of applications, prompt loan sanctioning and swift disbursement by the Banks to eligible beneficiaries.

The DC instructed the banks to expedite sanctioning and ensure timely disbursement of all approved cases so that eligible young entrepreneurs are able to access financial assistance without delay for establishing their ventures. He further called for sustained monitoring and regular follow-up to ensure smooth and effective implementation of the scheme at the ground level.

During the meeting, the DC also reviewed the functioning of SBDUs and BHDs, along with the recruitment process for contractual staff under the initiative.

He also reviewed the status of empanelment of motivators, external trainers and enterprise mentors was also assessed, with emphasis on strengthening mentoring and capacity-building support for aspiring entrepreneurs under Mission YUVA.

NASHA MUKT J&K ABHIYAN

Awareness activities held across schools, Panchayats in Bandipora



KT News Desk

BANDIPORA, MAY 12: District Administration Bandipora on Tuesday continued activities under the 100-Day Nasha Mukta Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan across the district with awareness programmes, essay competitions, pledge ceremonies, IEC campaigns and Gram Sabhas organised in educational institutions and Panchayat Halqas.

Awareness and IEC pamphlet distribution programmes, as per an official statement, were conducted at HS Panar, HS Achoora, HS Keton, Government High School Trigam, Government High School Ahamsharif, PM SHRI HSS Shadipora, HSS Nowgam, HSS Quilmuqam, HSS Chuntimulla and HSS Gadakhud to educate students about the harmful effects of drug abuse and promote a drug-free lifestyle.

Essay writing competitions on the theme "What Does Drug Addiction Mean to You" were organised at Government High School Garoora, HSS Gadakhud and HSS PTL Gurez Bandipora, while Government High School Nadihal conducted pledge-taking and essay writing activities. PM SHRI Girls High School Sumbal organised an awareness programme and a short race to spread the message of a healthy and drug-free society.

Special Gram Sabhas and awareness activities under the Nasha Mukta J&K Abhiyan

were also held at Panchayat Onagam-A, Panchayat C.A. Khan, Panchayat Halqa Sadunara-A in Block Hajin, Panchayat Ganastan-B, SK Bala Panchayat-B, Guzarbal Bonakoot and Braripora Bonakoot-C to raise awareness about substance abuse and promote a drug-free society.

The Excise Range North Kashmir organised an Anti-Drug Abuse Awareness Programme under the 100 Day Nasha Mukta J&K Abhiyan in collaboration with Baba Gani Public High School Shadipora, Sumbal. The programme included pledge-taking, sports activities and an anti-drug rally to spread awareness against substance abuse. Teachers and excise officials sensitised students about the harmful effects of drugs and the importance of a drug-free life.

Awareness sessions on drug abuse and preventive measures were also organised by the AYUSH Department Bandipora. Medical Officer AHWC Banyari also conducted an awareness programme at Panchayat Sadunara-A and Government High School Banyari with participation of students, teachers and healthcare staff.

The programmes witnessed enthusiastic participation of students, teachers, Panchayat representatives and the public, reflecting the continued commitment towards successful implementation of the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan across Bandipora district.

J&K Sports Council launches wave of sporting events across Kashmir

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, MAY 12: Jammu & Kashmir Sports Council (JKSC) has announced a comprehensive calendar of sporting events set to unfold across the Kashmir Valley over the coming weeks.

The initiative, as per an official statement, forms a core part of the 100-Day Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir Abhiyan, an ambitious government-led campaign aimed at engaging the youth of Jammu & Kashmir through sport, nurturing grassroots talent, and building a robust, drug-free sporting culture across the Union Territory.

The South Kashmir Volleyball League 2026 is scheduled to be held from 14 to 17 May 2026, organised in association with the Volleyball Association of Jammu & Kashmir. The league will provide a competitive platform for volleyball players from the South Kashmir region, fostering team spirit and identifying emerging talent at the district level.

Similarly, the Kashmir Championship Football League, to be conducted across all districts of the Kashmir Division, will commence its selection process with trials. The first trial is scheduled on 13 May 2026 at Madri Meharban Stadium, Ganderbal. Players aspiring to represent their districts are encouraged to report at the designated venue on the specified date. Subsequent trial schedules for remaining districts will be announced in due course.

Likewise, the Karate Championship will be inaugurated on 16 May 2026 at the



Indoor Sports Hall, Polo Ground, Srinagar. The championship will bring together karate exponents from across the Valley, providing a stage for athletes to demonstrate skill and competitive excellence in this traditional martial discipline.

Furthermore, in observance of World Bicycle Day, the J&K Sports Council will organise a Cyclothon in Srinagar. The event is aimed at promoting cycling as a healthy lifestyle choice among the youth while simultaneously raising awareness against drug abuse and obesity. Dates and route details will be announced soon.

A Women's Rugby Trophy is also in the pipeline, underscoring the Council's commitment to expanding opportunities for women in sport. Further details regarding venue, format, and dates will be communicated in the coming days.

Alongside the competitive events, the J&K Sports Council will conduct live demonstrations and introductory sessions across a range of martial arts and traditional combat disciplines. These include Thang-Ta,

Taekwondo, Karate, Pencak Silat, Wushu, Kudo, and Suky Martial Art. These demonstrations are designed to expose youth across the Valley to diverse sporting traditions, stimulate interest at the grassroots level, and provide a pathway into structured training programmes.

All events under the calendar are aligned with the broader objectives of the Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir Abhiyan: to engage youth constructively through sport, combat the menace of drug abuse, nurture athletic talent at the district and regional level, promote physical fitness, and address growing health concerns including obesity. Sport, in the vision of the J&K Sports Council, is not merely a recreational pursuit but a powerful instrument of social transformation and community well-being.

The J&K Sports Council invites athletes, coaches, associations, and sports enthusiasts across Jammu & Kashmir to participate actively in these events and contribute to building a healthier, stronger, and drug-free generation.

Shopian witnesses large-scale sports, awareness events



KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, MAY 12: In a significant push towards youth engagement & awareness and community wellness, a series of high-impact events were organized in Shopian Tuesday under the banner of Nasha Mukta Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan (NMJKA).

The initiatives, as per an official statement, spanned across sports, painting, seminars, pledges poster distribution, and physical well-being, drawing massive participation from the local youth.

Some prominent events held Tuesday include Inter-School Sports Tournament at GHSS Kaprin which included Volleyball and Kabaddi tournament for under-14 girls. The event saw young athletes showcasing exceptional skill and sportsmanship. These competitions

aimed to channelize the energy of the youth into constructive and healthy lifestyle choices.

A seminar at Polytechnic College Shopian was held to sensitise youth on menace of alarming drug abuse. The event was attended by Shabir Ahmad Kullay, MLA Shopian, who attended as the Chief Guest.

Addressing the gathering, MLA emphasized the importance of community vigilance and the role of educational institutions in building a drug-free society.

Under 100 Day campaign, series of awareness, sports activities and Yoga sessions were held across various locations in the Shopian district. These activities are designed to promote mental health and physical fitness, reinforcing the message of a healthy, resilient and drug-free Jammu & Kashmir.

Hundreds participate in anti-drug awareness rally in Anantnag

KT News Desk

ANANTNAG, MAY 12: As part of the 100 Day Nasha Mukta J&K Campaign, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK)-Anantnag, SKUAST-K on Monday organized an awareness programme on drug abuse at its Dooru campus.

The event witnessed, as per an official statement, enthusiastic participation from senior officers from civil administration and police, government officials, students, civil society members, religious figures, farmers, academicians, and youth representatives who collectively pledged to contribute towards building a drug-free society.

Addressing the gathering,



SDM Dooru Parvaiz Rahim, who was the Chief Guest on the occasion, emphasized the need for sustained community participation, grassroots awareness, and youth engagement to

effectively combat the menace of drug addiction. He called for collective societal action involving all stakeholders to eradicate substance abuse and safeguard the future generations.

Delivering a motivating lecture, the Senior Scientist KVK, Dr. Ishtiyah Ahmad Khan advised the students and youth to follow the path of discipline and determination to save themselves from drugs and to develop into responsible citizens. He briefed about the evolution of the centre as a scientific and agricultural extension institution, adding the organization is addressing key societal concerns affecting rural communities and youth.

Speaking on the occasion, the SHO Dooru sensitized the participants regarding the legal implications of drug abuse and narcotics trafficking. He urged students, parents, and society

to remain vigilant against drug peddlers so the youth don't fall victim to the addiction.

A pledge ceremony was also organized wherein all participants collectively resolved to work towards making the society, district and the country drug-free besides promoting disciplined and healthy lifestyles.

The programme concluded with a large awareness rally in which hundreds of participants marched from the campus to adjoining villages with great enthusiasm. They carried placards and raised anti-drug slogans like "Say No to Drugs, Yes to Life" to sensitize the general public about the harmful effects of substance abuse.

Sunil Bharti Mittal calls for higher domestic investment, renewable push at CII event

KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 11: Bharti Enterprises Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal has called on Indian industry to step up investments in the country, reduce dependence on imports, and accelerate the transition towards renewable energy amid global economic uncertainties.

Speaking at a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) event after receiving a special honour, Mittal expressed gratitude and reflected on the role played by industry chambers in shaping national policy and supporting economic growth.

"It is a great pleasure to receive this honour," Mittal said, recalling his long association with CII and his interactions with policymakers during challenging phases of the telecom sector.

Describing CII as a "very special place," Mittal said the chamber works closely with society and stakeholders to build a policy framework that helps move the country forward.

Mittal also highlighted his family's long association with industry bodies, noting that his brothers had served in leadership roles in CII and FICCI. He encouraged young entrepreneurs and business leaders to actively participate in chambers of commerce and contribute to policy discussions.

"The government looks



towards chambers, especially a chamber like CII, to work closely with them and guide their policy framework," he said.

Referring to the current global economic situation and tensions in the Middle East, Mittal said India could not remain insulated from international challenges despite maintaining strong economic growth.

"These are difficult times. India has been growing at 6 to 7 per cent year after year, and generally things are looking very good. But there are situations beyond anybody's control," he said.

Echoing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent message to industry, Mittal said businesses must play a larger role in supporting the economy by generating employment, investing domestically, and cutting avoidable imports.

"We need to get away from

this obsession with import of gold. We need to lower our energy costs and move faster towards renewable energy," he said.

Mittal stressed that this was not the time for companies to slow investments but to "double down" on India's long-term growth story.

Highlighting investments by Bharti Airtel, he said the company spent nearly Rs 31,000 crore in capital expenditure during 2024-25, with an additional Rs 7,000 crore invested through its tower subsidiary. He added that investments were expected to rise further in the coming financial year.

"This is a continent of consumers, a large young population wanting more products and services. Let's give them more from India - make in India, from India, serving India," Mittal said.

Putin hails Russia's test launch of new ballistic missile

Calls it world's most powerful

AP

Moscow, May 12: Russia on Tuesday test-fired a new intercontinental ballistic missile as part of efforts to modernise the country's nuclear forces, a launch hailed by President Vladimir Putin just days after his claim that the fighting in Ukraine is nearing an end.

Putin said that the nuclear-armed Sarmat missile would enter combat service at the end of the year. It was built to replace the aging Soviet-built Voyevoda.

"This is the most powerful missile in the world," Putin declared, adding that the combined power of the Sarmat's individually targeted warheads is more than four times higher than that of any Western counterpart.

The Russian leader has repeatedly brandished the nuclear sword after sending troops into Ukraine in February 2022 to try to deter the West from ramping up support for Ukraine.

After overseeing a military parade on Red Square on Saturday commemorating the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, which for the first time in nearly two decades didn't include heavy weapons, Putin declared the conflict in Ukraine is coming to an end.



Since coming to power in 2000, Putin has overseen efforts to upgrade the Soviet-built components of the Russian nuclear triad - deploying hundreds of new, land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, commissioning new nuclear submarines and modernizing nuclear-capable bombers.

Russia's effort to revamp its nuclear forces pushed the United States to launch a costly modernisation of its arsenal.

The last remaining nuclear arms pact between Russia and the US expired in February, leaving no caps on the world's two largest atomic arsenals for the first time in more than a half-century and fueling fears of an unconstrained nuclear arms race.

The Sarmat - designated "Satan II" in the West - is meant to replace about 40 Soviet-built Voyevoda missiles. Its development began in 2011 and before Tuesday, the missile

used its conventionally-armed version twice to strike Ukraine. Oreshnik's range of up to 5,000 kilometres (3,100 miles) makes it capable of reaching any target in Europe.

Putin also announced Russia was in the "final stages" of the development of the nuclear-armed Poseidon underwater drone and the Burevestnik cruise missile powered by miniature atomic reactors.

The Poseidon is designed to explode near enemy coastlines and cause a radioactive tsunami. The Burevestnik has virtually unlimited range thanks to nuclear propulsion, allowing it to loiter for days, circling air defences and attacking from an unexpected direction.

Putin has described those new weapons as part of a Russian response to the US missile shield that Washington developed after its 2001 withdrawal from a Cold War-era US-Soviet pact that limited missile defences.

Russian military planners have feared a missile shield could tempt Washington to launch a first strike that would knock out most of Moscow's nuclear arsenal in hopes of intercepting a small number of surviving missiles fired in retaliation.

"We were forced to consider ensuring our strategic security in the face of the new reality and the need to maintain a strategic balance of power and parity," Putin said.

Bhagat reviews dev works, SANJY-2026 preparedness at Pahalgam

Conducts surprise inspection of dumping sites Chandanwari, Pahalgam granaries

KT News Desk

Anantnag, May 12: Commissioner Secretary, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Saurabh Bhagat, on Tuesday conducted an extensive tour of Anantnag to review development activities and preparedness of the department for the upcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY) 2026. He was accompanied by the senior officials of FCS&CA, TSOs and field staff.

During the visit, the Commissioner Secretary inspected the ongoing works related to augmentation of storage infrastructure, repair/renovation of departmental assets and other logistical arrangements being put in place for ensuring seamless supply of foodgrains and other essential commodities



during SANJY-2026. He carried out a surprise inspection of the Chandanwari and Pahalgam Granaries, which function as the main dumping sites for storage and dispatch of foodgrains for Yatra Langars, service providers and government establishments enroute the holy Cave.

Saurabh Bhagat also enquired about the stock position, quality control measures, fire-safety equipments and security of the premises. He emphasized strict adherence to quality norms,

round-the-clock monitoring of stocks and maintaining adequate buffer stock to meet any exigency.

Expressing satisfaction over the arrangements, the Commissioner Secretary directed the officers to ensure 100 per cent dumping of requisite foodgrains and petroleum products well before the commencement of Yatra. He instructed the field functionaries to work in close coordination with district administration, and other agencies to ensure hassle-free

services for the pilgrims as well as the local population.

Later, the Commissioner Secretary carried out inspection of various sale outlets in Pahalgam and also visited the office of Assistant Director FCS&CA. He directed the Assistant Director to identify land for establishing Research Institute which will function as a capacity building centre to enhance the skills and professional competence of the employees and workforce of department in the district.

"The institute will serve as a center of excellence for in-service training of employees on modern supply chain management, foodgrain quality control, e-Pos operations, end-to-end computerization of PDS, grievance redressal mechanisms and best practices in public distribution," he remarked.

JJM House Committee visits Charar-i-Sharief constituency

Reviews implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission

KT News Desk

Budgam, May 12: The House Committee on Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) on Tuesday conducted an extensive visit to various areas of Charar-i-Sharief Constituency to review and monitor the implementation of the Mission.

The committee was led by its Chairman Justice Hasnain Masoodi and accompanied by MLA Chadoora Ali Mohammad Dar, MLA Tral Rafiq Ahmad Naik, MLA Pattan Javid Riyaz Bedar, MLA Poonch Ajaz Ahmed Jan along with senior officers and officials of the Jal Jeevan Mission Department.

During the visit, the committee inspected ongoing works at Dadompura, Nagam, Zalloosa, various water supply schemes and pipeline



installations across the Charar-i-Sharief Constituency.

The purpose of the visit was to assess whether the ongoing works are being executed in accordance with the prescribed norms, standards and regulations of the Jal Jeevan Mission. The committee reviewed the functioning, quality standards and progress of various schemes and interacted with the concerned officials regarding on-ground

implementation. The committee emphasized transparency, accountability and strict adherence to JJM guidelines to ensure the effective and timely completion of water supply projects for the benefit of the public. Necessary directions were issued to the concerned departments to maintain quality standards and proper regulation in all works under execution.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Nasha Mukt J&K Abhiyan

schools, mosques, temples, gurdwaras, and NGOs to dedicate one hour weekly to strengthen this initiative through awareness. It will deliver real results, acting like an early warning system, monitoring hotspots while building them into fully drug-free zones."

"The second pillar is the Family Fortress Initiative, which will rely on the strong family and community bonds for the ultimate shield against drug addiction. Over the next 69 days, every school, college, and place of worship in Jammu Kashmir should host a weekly family dialogue on drugs. These dialogues should be open, honest paired with local campaign audits to spot and fix gaps," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that in the past 31 days, over 2,35,000 awareness and outreach events have been held across Jammu Kashmir. More than 44,000 OPD patients have been treated, nearly 700 drug smugglers and peddlers arrested, and stringent action has been taken against the drug supply chain.

"Action has targeted every financial transaction of drug cartels, seizing crores in properties built from drug money by major smugglers. Across Jammu and Kashmir divisions, 300 driving licenses and over 400 vehicle registrations linked to drug smugglers have been recommended for cancellation. Enforcement agencies have ensured massive drug hauls. We have inspected more than 3,300 drug stores, and 150 licenses have been suspended for violating the norms.

Nearly 3,000 CCTV cameras are now installed at the drug stores across Union Territory. Over two dozen smugglers have been nabbed under PIT-NDPS Act. I assure the people that we will chase every rupee, every asset, and shell company of drug traffickers, ensuring the harshest punishment for those who are destroying our youth's future," the Lieutenant Governor said. (KNO)

Speaker set

on March 31, 2026.

On April 02, the Legislative Assembly had granted two months' extension to the House Committee on Jal Jeevan Mission to submit its report.

For the financial year 2025-26, the Speaker constituted the House Committee on May 28, 2025. (KNO)

Under PM Modi

Yuva and other schemes. He also unveiled the jersey and trophy for the upcoming SPANDAN League 2026, North Kashmir Football Championship, to be organised by BSF.

Dr Sajjad Shafi, Member Legislative Assembly from Uri; Shri Nalin Prabhat DGP; S.J.M. Gillani, Special DG Coordination PHQ; Sarmaad Hafeez, Commissioner Secretary Social Welfare, V K Birdi, IGP Kashmir; Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Syeed Fakhruddin Hamid, Deputy Commissioner, Baramulla; senior officials of BSF, Police and civil administration, prominent citizens and people from different walks of life in large numbers were present.

NEET-UG 2026

agencies, the National Testing Agency, with the approval of the Government of India, has decided to cancel the NEET (UG) 2026 examination conducted on 3 May 2026, and to re-conduct the examination on dates that will be notified separately," the agency said.

The agency said the inputs received, taken together with findings shared by law enforcement agencies, established that the "present examination process could not be allowed to stand."

"The re-conducted examination dates, along with the re-issued admit-card schedule, will be communicated through the official channels of the Agency in the coming days," it added.

The NTA further said the government has decided to refer the matter to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for a comprehensive

inquiry into the allegations linked to the examination.

"NTA will extend full cooperation to the Bureau and will provide all materials, records, and assistance the inquiry requires," it added.

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) was conducted by the NTA on May 3 for students seeking admission to medical education courses at the undergraduate level.

In a post on X on Sunday, the NTA had said question papers were transported in GPS-tracked vehicles carrying unique, traceable watermark identifiers, while examination centres were monitored through AI-assisted CCTV surveillance from a central control room.

"The National Testing Agency is aware of reports concerning the action initiated by the Rajasthan Special Operations Group in connection with alleged irregularities around NEET (UG) 2026. The examination on May 3, 2026 was conducted as scheduled and under a full security protocol," the NTA had said.

According to the agency, inputs regarding alleged malpractice activity were received on the evening of May 7, four days after the examination, and were escalated to central agencies on the morning of May 8 for "independent verification and necessary action".

It further said the action taken by law enforcement authorities, including recent detentions reported in the media, was a result of the "professional and timely work" of the investigating agencies.

Backing Pak after

Islamabad during the military confrontation that followed the April 22, 2025 attack in Pahalgam."

"It is for nations that consider themselves responsible to reflect on whether supporting attempts to protect terrorist infrastructure affects their reputation and standing," Jaiswal said.

He said Operation Sindoor was launched as a "precise, targeted and calibrated" response

to the Pahalgam attack and was aimed at dismantling terror infrastructure operating from Pakistan and territories under its control.

The remarks came amid reports that China had provided technical support to Pakistan during the military escalation between the two countries last year.

Pertinently, "Operation Sindoor" was a targeted four-day military campaign launched by India from May 7 to 10, 2025, in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 civilians, mostly tourists.

The Government of India described the operation as a calibrated tri-services response aimed at dismantling terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

During the operation, Indian armed forces carried out precision strikes on nine alleged terror training camps linked to the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).

Officials said the action was designed to remain targeted and non-escalatory while focusing on terror infrastructure.

The strikes caused significant casualties among terrorist groups. On May 10, 2025, Pakistan's Director General of Military Operations reportedly contacted his Indian counterpart seeking a cessation of firing, which India subsequently agreed to, bringing the brief India-Pakistan military confrontation to a halt. (KNO)

MeT forecasts rain

been advised to suspend farm operations till May 13 due to the prevailing weather conditions.

The department said weather conditions are likely to remain partly to generally cloudy with brief showers from May 13 to May 17, while scattered areas may receive light rain or thundershowers on May 18. Similar partly cloudy conditions are expected to continue till May 21.

Meanwhile, several parts of Kashmir and Jammu divisions recorded below-normal temperatures along with rainfall during the past 24 hours.

Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 24.4 degrees Celsius, slightly above normal, while the minimum settled at 12.5 degrees Celsius. The city received 1.9 mm of rainfall during the last 24 hours, officials said.

Pahalgam, one of the coldest tourist resorts in Kashmir, recorded a minimum temperature of 8.4 degrees Celsius, while Gulmarg recorded 4.8 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu division, Jammu city recorded a maximum temperature of 33 degrees Celsius, which was over four degrees below normal, while the minimum temperature settled at 21.9 degrees Celsius.

Batote received the highest rainfall in the Jammu division at 10.8 mm, while Bhandarwah recorded 13.8 mm of rainfall during the past 24 hours, according to the MeT data.

The weather office urged people, particularly those living in vulnerable areas, to remain cautious during thunderstorms and avoid unnecessary movement during periods of intense weather activity. (KNO)

NRPC rebukes

accordance with the Deviation Settlement Mechanism (DSM) Regulations." NRPC said.

In the meantime, authorities in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh according to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO) has informed the NRPC that the Union Territory is expecting no power crunch in summer in view of increased hydel energy output.

The officials have also informed the committee that the Power Development Department is expecting less power demand in coming months.

NRPC has said, "J&K representative informed that with the availability of hydro power and low demand in summer months, power position in J&K is expected to be comfortable."

Meanwhile, NRPC said that, "Due to inadequate reactive compensation in J&K STU network, severe low voltages have been observed in J&K grid." (KNO)

AI cannot replace moral weight of doctor: VP at AIIMS convocation

PTI

New Delhi, May 12: Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Tuesday asserted that no Artificial Intelligence (AI) can replace the moral weight of a doctor at a patient's bedside and asked the medical practitioners to be "patient with patients".

Addressing the 51st convocation of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here, he said doctors should not miss the opportunity to study in prestigious institutions abroad, but they must come back to serve their people back home.

He said AI-driven technology is taking over various sectors, including medicine. "But no AI can replace the moral weight of a doctor at the bedside of a patient," he said.

"Your humane touch and a few humble words can cure more than what the medicine can," the Vice-President told doctors, urging them to be "patient with patients" when they ask foolish questions.

"When you explain, they will understand," he said. Radhakrishnan noted that the opening of AIIMS in other places has taken healthcare to previously unserved areas, and people from far-off places do not have to rush to Delhi for treatment now.

He also lauded the Union health ministry for opening new medical and nursing colleges in several states to meet the students' aspirations.

Union Health Minister J P Nadda was also present at the function.

Sensex dives 1,456 points, Nifty tumbles to 23,379

Elevated oil prices, US-Iran tensions weigh on sentiment



PTI

Mumbai, May 12: Equity benchmark indices ended lower for the fourth consecutive session on Tuesday, with the Sensex and Nifty tumbling nearly 2 per cent, as a spike in crude oil prices and uncertainty surrounding the West Asia conflict clouded markets' confidence.

Unabated foreign fund outflows and the rupee depreciating to a lifetime low also impacted investor sentiment.

Amid a widespread sell-off, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 1,456.04 points, or 1.92 per cent, to settle at 74,559.24. During the day, it dived 1,565.78 points, or 2 per cent, to 74,449.50.

A total of 3,412 stocks declined, while 869 advanced and 129 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 436.30 points, or 1.83 per cent, to end at 23,379.55.

"Domestic equities remained under pressure, with the rupee weakening to record lows amid rising crude oil prices linked to escalating tensions in West Asia, along with FII outflows.

"The decline was broad-based, led by IT and realty stocks. IT stocks underperformed as concerns grew around AI-driven pricing pressure and potential disruption following recent enterprise adoption initiatives by OpenAI," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

In four trading days, the BSE gauge has tanked 3,399.28 points or 4.36 per cent, and the Nifty slumped 951.4 points or 3.91 per cent.

From the Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra, Adani Ports, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Titan and Bharat Electronics were among the major laggards.

On the other hand, the State Bank of India was the only winner from the pack.

In the broader market, the BSE MidCap Select index tanked 2.92 per cent,

and the SmallCap Select index declined by 2.73 per cent.

Sectorally, realty dropped 4.22 per cent, Focused IT (3.61 per cent), services (3.51 per cent), IT (3.37 per cent), consumer durables (3.35 per cent) and industrials (3 per cent).

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 2.75 per cent higher at USD 107.1 per barrel.

The rupee depreciated 35 paise to close at an all-time low of 95.63 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday.

Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Live-long Wealth, said, unlike a routine profit-booking phase, the current decline appears to be driven by a broader "confidence shock" in the market.

"Investors are increasingly interpreting recent policy messaging and austerity-oriented commentary as an indication that policymakers may be preparing for a tougher macroeconomic environment ahead," he said.

The pressure on Indian equities is now being amplified by a macro "triple hit" -- crude oil prices hovering near USD 105-107 per barrel, the rupee slipping to a fresh record low against the US dollar, and continued aggressive FII outflows, Hariprasad added.

US President Donald Trump on Monday said the ceasefire with Iran was at its "weakest" and on "massive life support", a day after he rejected Tehran's proposal to end the months-long war as "totally unacceptable".

"It is at its weakest... After reading that piece of garbage they sent us... It's on life support, massive life support," Trump told reporters at the Oval Office in response to a question on the ceasefire with Iran in the wake of the rejection of the peace proposal.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 8,437.56 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

'India has sufficient fuel stocks, no rationing planned'

PTI

New Delhi, May 11: India has no plans to ration fuel supplies despite ongoing disruptions in global energy markets, a top oil ministry official said Monday, adding that the country has maintained adequate inventories of crude products and LPG while diversifying imports to manage supply risks.

"There is no need to panic. There are sufficient supplies. There is no rationing in place. It's not going to happen," Oil Secretary Neeraj Mittal said at CII's Annual Business Summit here, noting that India had maintained around 60 days of fuel stocks and about 45 days of LPG inventories during the past 67 days of market disruption.

The comments came a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged for fuel conservation and lower imports as surging global energy prices pressure India's foreign exchange reserves, while also calling for restraint in gold purchases to ease external vulnerabilities.

This was seen by some as preparation of ground for a possible fuel price hike.

Petrol and diesel continue to be sold at two-year-old rates despite international prices shooting up since the West Asia conflict started 10 weeks back. Holding prices despite over 50 per cent rise in input cost has led to oil companies losing Rs 1,000 crore to Rs 1,200 crore - a loss that is now threatening their financial viability.

A top government source



however said, "default mode of the government is to keep the prices and supplies stable.

Mittal said the government had secured additional energy cargoes, increased procurement from existing suppliers and absorbed part of the price shock through fiscal measures, including excise duty cuts on petrol and diesel.

India, the world's third-largest oil importer and consumer, was also accelerating efforts to expand domestic exploration, strategic reserves and alternative energy programs including green hydrogen, ethanol blending and sustainable aviation fuel, he said.

"For a country like India which consumes 5 million barrels a day, to have a 90-day reserve would be putting a lot of money in a box without using it at all," he said, adding that the government was exploring "creative ways" to expand strategic reserves while generating returns on stored crude.

Mittal said the government had spent the past 67 days

managing supply disruptions arising from geopolitical conflict and constraints in global energy shipments.

"The constraint has not changed at all. In fact, it is a shade worse," he said, adding that India had nevertheless managed to get its 14 ships out of the war-hit Strait of Hormuz during the period.

India has maintained around 60 days of fuel stocks and roughly 45 days of LPG inventories throughout the crisis, he said.

"We have procured from other sources. We have procured from other countries. We have increased procurement from existing countries and that has kept us going in terms of supply management in the short run," he said.

The official said India's large refining base had helped cushion the impact of supply shocks, allowing the country not only to meet domestic demand but also continue exports of refined petroleum products.

He said the government had also undertaken calibrated demand-management

measures, including prioritising LPG supplies for household cooking use and allowing 70 per cent industrial LPG supply after industry requests for easing restrictions.

Mittal said nearly 100 per cent digital delivery tracking of LPG cylinders had significantly reduced diversion and black-market sales.

"There is no need to panic. There's sufficient supplies. There is no rationing in place. It's not going to happen," he said.

On strategic reserves, Mittal said India was evaluating "creative ways" to expand stockpiles without locking up excessive capital, given the country's daily oil consumption of about 5 million barrels.

"For a country like India which consumes 5 million barrels a day, to have a 90-day reserve would be putting a lot of money in a box without using it at all," he said. He added that the government was exploring commercial partnerships and trading models to ensure strategic crude inventories could also generate returns.

Mittal said the government had absorbed much of the price shock through fiscal measures, including excise duty cuts on petrol and diesel that created a revenue impact of around Rs 1.6 lakh crore. "Government uses all sorts of tools," he said, adding that India had remained "a relative oasis of calm" compared with countries that had imposed fuel rationing and stricter demand curbs.

BJP slams oppn over criticism of PM's austerity appeal



PTI

New Delhi, May 12: The BJP on Tuesday hit back at opposition parties over their criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's austerity appeal amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, accusing them of spreading panic and indulging in negative politics.

The ruling party's attack came after opposition leaders including Rahul Gandhi and Arvind Kejriwal slammed the prime minister's remarks and termed them "evidence of failure".

Addressing a press conference here, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said the prime minister's appeal has been made in national interest and should have been supported by all political parties.

"This was only an appeal, not a law or a directive. The prime minister appealed to citizens to avoid unnecessary foreign travel, use public transport and reduce avoidable expenditure. How can anyone oppose such steps?" he said.

Targeting Congress leader Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Bhatia said, "Those who are born with a golden spoon in their mouth will naturally feel bad when citizens stand with the prime minister's appeal."

He also attacked the Aam Aadmi Party and its supremo Kejriwal over allegations linked to the "Sheesh Mahal" controversy.

"Arvind Kejriwal is objecting to the appeal. The same person whose 'Sheesh Mahal' became a symbol of luxury -- and in whose toilet a gold pot was installed -- will definitely feel bad," Bhatia said.

He claimed the opposition parties, including the Congress, Samajwadi Party and AAP, are trying to mislead people over the government's advisory measures.

Bhatia recalled that similar appeals had been made earlier by former prime ministers Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi.

"This is not the first time in independent India's history that such an appeal has been made. The prime minister has shown foresight and appealed to citizens in the national interest," he said. Bhatia also invoked the economic situation during the UPA government's tenure and referred to statements made by former prime minister Manmohan Singh and former finance minister P Chidambaram. "During the UPA government, inflation used to remain at 10 to 11 per cent. Today, our economy is not suffering from such inflationary pressures," he said.

Referring to Manmohan Singh's remarks on fuel price rise, Bhatia said, "In September 2012, when he was asked why petrol and diesel prices were being increased, he had said money did not grow on trees."

He also cited a June 2013 statement of Chidambaram and said, "P Chidambaram had advised people not to buy gold at that time as well, despite there being no warlike situation."

West Asia crisis likely to dominate BRICS foreign ministers meeting in New Delhi

PTI

New Delhi, May 12: The escalating crisis in West Asia and its impact on the global energy supply chain are expected to dominate deliberations at a two-day meeting of BRICS foreign ministers to be hosted by India this week. While Tehran has informed New Delhi that Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is set to attend the May 14-15 conclave, sources suggest his plans could change if the situation in the region changes dramatically.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will skip the meeting as his presence is required in Beijing for US President Donald Trump's three-day state visit, which coincides with the BRICS gathering.

Chinese Ambassador to India Xi Feihong will attend the meeting on Wang's behalf, Beijing announced on Tuesday. Foreign ministers of several BRICS member states including Russia's Sergey Lavrov have already confirmed their participation, the sources said.

The BRICS foreign ministers will also

call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

India, as the chair of the BRICS, is hosting the conclave of the foreign ministers ahead of the annual summit of the grouping in September.

It will be interesting to see if the foreign ministerial conclave manages to produce a consensus statement on the conflict in West Asia.

Sharp differences among the member states over the US-Israel war on Iran stalled India's efforts to build a consensus position on the conflict during a meeting of the grouping's deputy foreign ministers and special envoys on Middle East and North America last month.

No consensus statement on the conflict could be reached largely due to differences between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Iran. The two neighbouring countries have sparred in recent weeks over Iran's alleged attacks on energy infrastructure in the UAE. After the West Asia conflict escalated, Iran urged India, as the current BRICS chair, to leverage its "independent role" to halt the US-Israel hostilities against Iran. The BRICS meeting will

be chaired by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

"BRICS foreign ministers and heads of delegation from member and partner countries will participate in the meeting. They will also call on Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Tuesday. It said the foreign ministers will exchange views on "global and regional issues of mutual interest".

The BRICS member and partner countries will participate in a session themed "BRICS@20: Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability" on May 15.

It will be followed by a session on the "Reforms of Global Governance and Multilateral System", according to the MEA. The BRICS foreign ministers held their last meeting on the margins of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 80) in September last.

The meeting was chaired by India in its capacity as the incoming BRICS chair for 2026.

Wife's career ambition not cruelty or desertion: SC

PTI

New Delhi, May 12: In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court held on Tuesday that a qualified woman's decision to pursue her career, and ensure a stable and safe environment for her child cannot be branded as "cruelty" or "desertion".

The top court said the "feudalistic" approach of a family court in holding a woman's pursuit of her professional career as a dentist as "cruelty" and "desertion" was "regressive" and "ultra-conservative".

The family court's decision was upheld by the Gujarat High Court. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta set aside the "regressive" findings of the courts below and said a wife's professional identity is not subject to an "implied spousal veto".

Deciding the cross-pleas filed by the estranged wife and the husband, the bench took note of the submissions of the woman that she was no longer hopeful of a patch-up and upheld the decree of divorce granted by the courts below on the ground of an irretrievable breakdown of the marriage and not on the basis of cruelty and desertion by her.

It also took note of the fact that the man has remarried and refused to allow the husband's plea that his wife be prosecuted for the offence of perjury.

It, however, expunged the observations made by the family court against the woman with very strong observations. "We are well into the 21st century and yet an attempt by a qualified woman to pursue her professional career and



to secure a safe and stable environment for the upbringing of her child has been treated as an act of cruelty and desertion by the courts below," Justice Mehta, who authored the verdict, said.

The bench criticised the observations of the family court, which were affirmed by the high court, and said those are "not only legally unsustainable but also deeply disquieting".

"The endeavour of the appellant to establish her own dental clinic at Ahmedabad, rather than allowing the professional qualification she had earned through years of effort to lie dormant and go waste, has been viewed with

disapproval, merely because her stance did not conform to the expectation of the husband and the in-laws that she must abandon her aspirations and reside with her husband at a remote location on account of his posting as an Army officer," the verdict said.

Referring to the reasoning of the courts below, the top court said it appeared to be founded upon "deeply-entrenched archaic societal assumptions that a wife's professional identity is subject to an implied spousal veto".

"That her autonomy must yield to the geographical and occupational demands of her husband; and that her decision to

secure a safer and more conducive environment for the upbringing of her child, even at the cost of living separately for certain periods, would construe as a matrimonial default," it said.

The bench said such assumptions, rooted in a conservative patriarchal understanding of marital roles, are wholly incompatible with the progressive evolution of the society, where dignity, autonomy and equal participation of women in all spheres are increasingly recognised as fundamental to social advancement.

"It must be emphasised that a well-educated and professionally-qualified woman cannot be expected to be confined within the rigid boundaries of matrimonial obligations alone. Marriage does not eclipse her individuality, nor does it subjugate her identity under that of her spouse," it said.

It is for both the husband and the wife to balance their marital ties in a manner that respects mutual aspirations, and not for one to unilaterally dictate the life choices of the other, the verdict said.

"As has been recognised in the evolving discourse on matrimonial jurisprudence, a woman can no longer be treated as a mere appendage to the household of the husband, and her independent intellectual and professional identity and aspirations must receive due credence and respect," it said.

Referring to the facts of the case, the bench said what has been portrayed as defiance is, in fact, an assertion of independence.

Iran says US must accept peace plan or face 'failure'

AFP

Tehran, May 12: Iran's chief negotiator said Tuesday that Washington must accept Tehran's latest peace plan or face failure, after US President Donald Trump warned the truce in the Middle East war was on the brink of collapse.

The war, which erupted more than two months ago with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, has spread throughout the Middle East and roiled the global economy despite the ceasefire, impacting hundreds of millions worldwide.

Both sides have refused to make concessions and repeatedly threatened to resume fighting, but neither appears willing to return to all-out war.

"There is no alternative but to accept the rights of the Iranian people as laid out in the 14-point proposal. Any other approach will be completely inconclusive; nothing but one failure after another," Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said in a post on X. "The longer they drag their feet, the more American taxpayers will pay for it."

Iran sent its proposal in response to an earlier US plan, details of which remain limited. Media reports have said the American plan involved a one-page memorandum of understanding aimed at ending the fighting and establishing a framework for negotiations on



Iran's nuclear program.

Iran's foreign ministry said its response called for ending the war on all fronts, including Lebanon, halting the US naval blockade on Iranian ports and securing the release of Iranian assets frozen abroad under longstanding sanctions.

But Trump slammed Tehran's reply as "TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE," saying the US would enjoy a "complete victory" over Iran and that the truce that has halted fighting for over a month was on its last legs.

In a show of defiance, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they carried out drills in Tehran aimed at "enhancing combat capability to confront any movement of the American-Zionist enemy," state media reported Tuesday.

The war of words has unnerved people in Iran who do not know what the coming months will bring. "We are just trying to dig our nails into anything that could help us survive. The future is so uncertain and we are just living day to day," Maryam, a 43-year-old painter from the capital Tehran, told Paris-based journalists.

"We are trying to find a way to continue. Keeping hope is very difficult right now."

Energy shock
Trump's angry reaction to Iran's counteroffer sparked a spike in oil prices and dashed hopes that a deal could be quickly negotiated to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to commercial shipping.

Iran is restricting maritime traffic in the waterway and has

been setting up a payment mechanism to charge tolls for crossing ships, sparking a global energy crisis.

"The energy supply shock that began in the first quarter is the largest the world has ever experienced," the CEO and president of Saudi oil giant Aramco, Amin Nasser, told investors.

US officials have stressed it would be "unacceptable" for Tehran to control the strait, which usually carries about a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas.

"Iran should not use this strait as a weapon to pressure or to blackmail the Gulf countries," Qatari foreign minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani told reporters in Doha on Tuesday.

Trump told Fox News that he was considering reviving a short-lived US operation to guide oil tankers and commercial ships through Hormuz, but that he had not yet taken a final decision.

The maritime standoff has also left the world facing a shortage of fertilizer — much of which comes from Gulf ports — and risks food supplies for tens of millions of people. Jorge Moreira da Silva, executive director of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), told AFP there were just a few weeks left to avert a potentially "massive humanitarian crisis" that could force 45 million more people into hunger.

Trump announces talks with 'failed' Cuba



AFP

Washington, May 12: President Donald Trump on Tuesday announced talks with Cuba, which has been crippled by a US fuel blockade in the wake of Washington's capture of key regional ally Nicolas Maduro. In a post on Truth Social, Trump described the communist-ruled island as "a failed country," adding: "Cuba is asking for help, and we are going to talk!!!" He

did not provide details.

There is growing speculation in Washington that Trump is seeking to overturn the Cuban government as part of a drive to increase US dominance in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Earlier this month, Trump said the United States would be "taking over" the Caribbean island off the Florida coast "almost immediately."

He has also said following the US military operation to depose

Venezuela's longtime leader Maduro that Cuba will be next. The communist island has been in a standoff with successive US administrations since the 1960s and Florida, only around 90 miles (145 km) away, hosts a large, politically influential Cuban exile community.

Venezuela was a diplomatic and economic lifeline for impoverished Cuba and the fall of Maduro has left the island even more isolated. Oil producer Venezuela was the main source of fuel for Cuba and the shutting down of the supply route by the United States is provoking frequent power cuts.

On May 1, Trump announced new economic sanctions targeting key sections of the Cuban economy.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez called this "collective punishment" and "unilateral coercive measures."

Bangladesh beats Pakistan — Rana picks five as Tigers win first Test



REUTERS

Dhaka, May 12: Seamer Nahid Rana bowled 5-40 on an eventual final day to bowl Bangladesh to a 104-run victory in the opening test against Pakistan in Mirpur on Tuesday.

The host set Pakistan a victory target of 268 and then bundled it out for 163, prising out seven wickets in the final session to go 1-0 up in the two-test series.

Bangladesh had posted 413 in its first innings and Pakistan responded with 386 to stay in the hunt.

With significant time lost to rain on the third and fourth days of the contest, Bangladesh declared its second innings on 240-9. Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto followed his first-innings hundred with 87, and Mominul Haque (56) scored his second half-century of the match. The onus was on its bowlers to script a memorable win, and Rana led its attack with an inspired display of fast bowling to fashion Bangladesh's first victory against Pakistan on home soil.

Abdullah Fazal made a gutsy 66 but

Pakistan kept losing wickets at regular intervals and could not bat out the final day.

Rana dismissed Shaheen Afridi, caught at forward short leg, to seal the win. Fellow seamer Taskin Ahmed and spinner Tajjul Islam claimed two wickets apiece.

"Very happy. Proud of all the guys, the way we played," Bangladesh captain Shanto said after collecting his player of the match award.

"We declared because we have a quality bowling attack and in these conditions Rana, Taskin, Tajjul bowled really well and that's what I want from them," he added.

Pakistan captain Shan Masood said his side failed to exploit the seam-friendly conditions at the Shere Bangla National Stadium.

"We couldn't make the most of it with both bat and ball. I thought we could have pushed ahead and scored more runs (in the first innings)," he said.

The final test is scheduled in Sylhet from Saturday.

US cost of Iran war nearing \$29 billion: Pentagon

AFP

Washington, May 12: The Pentagon said Tuesday that the cost of the war with Iran had climbed to nearly \$29 billion, as President Donald Trump faced mounting scrutiny over the conflict and its impact on military readiness. The new figure, revealed by

the Defense Department during a budget hearing on Capitol Hill, is about \$4 billion higher than the estimate offered by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth two weeks ago.

Hegseth and General Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were testifying on a \$1.5 trillion budget request for 2027 alongside Pentagon finance chief Jules III

when they were asked for an update on the war's price tag.

"At the time of testimony... it was \$25 billion dollars," Hurst told lawmakers, referring to Hegseth's April 29 estimate. "But the joint staff team and the comptroller are constantly looking at estimates and now we think it is closer to 29."

AFP

Geneva, May 12: Conflict and violence drove more people to flee within their own countries last year than natural and manmade disasters for the first time on record, monitors said on Tuesday.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center and the Norwegian Refugee Council said in their annual report on the subject that at the end of 2025, 82.2 million people were living in internal displacement worldwide.

The figure is just under the highest number ever recorded in

2024. "Numbers remain at historic highs," the director of the IDMC, Tracy Lucas, told AFP, calling the trends "a wake-up call."

Over the course of last year, 65.8 million new internal displacements were reported, including a number of people forced to flee multiple times, the report showed. Conflict and violence were responsible for 32.3 million of those displacements — up 60 percent from a year earlier — while 29.9 million fled storms, floods and other disasters.

"Never have we recorded such a staggering number of displacements

related to conflict," said Lucas.

"Global collapse" -

The report detailed how emerging, escalating and entrenched conflicts in places such as Iran and the Democratic Republic of Congo forced people to flee repeatedly within their countries.

Such displacements remain highly concentrated.

As they were hit by deepening instability last year, Iran and the DR Congo alone accounted for two-thirds of all new conflict-driven internal displacements, counting around 10 million each, the report said.

Conflict created more internal displacement than disasters last year: monitors

Bowlers have some catching up to do in T20 cricket: Dravid



PTI

New Delhi, May 12: World Cup winning former India head coach Rahul Dravid said the grammar of T20 batting has undergone a complete metamorphosis of late and bowlers have some serious "catching up to do."

Dravid, who guided India to its second T20 World Cup triumph in 2024 in the Caribbean, is marvelled at how the young guns like Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Ayush Mhatre, Priyansh Arya along with world's No. 1 ranked T20 batter Abhishek Sharma have entirely changed the approach in the Powerplay overs.

"In a sense, to see the quality of batting that has happened over the last two or three years, I think the bowlers in that format of the game will slowly have to do some catching up," Dravid told PTI in an exclusive interview from Dublin,

where he was unveiled as the owner of European T20 Premier League (ETPL)'s Dublin franchise.

The former India skipper and one of India's most respected coaches raved about how batters are now hitting boundaries to parts of the ground which earlier seemed out of bounds.

"I think batsmanship and the ability to hit sixes and to access different parts of the ground has certainly improved leaps and bounds.

"Bowlers will have to keep working on their skills and keep developing. I am sure, some of them will be able to still stand out and hold their own," said Dravid, who has coached IPL teams like Rajasthan Royals and Delhi Capitals.

However, he had no hesitation in admitting modern batters have adapted to the requirements of the T20 game better than the bowlers. However, Dravid was

confident of a change.

"I think if you look at it in terms of balance, probably a lot more batsmen are able to cope with the requirements of the modern T20 game than, say, some of the bowlers have been able to at this point of time. That may change in two or three years," he added.

The scenario is, however, a bit different in Test matches where bowlers have had the upper hand in consistently producing result-oriented games.

"I mean, if you look at Test cricket today, nearly every Test match produces a result. So, I think bowlers are probably holding the sway in some of the Test matches that we are seeing.

"You know, two-day matches, three-day matches. So, bowlers have started holding the sway in Test cricket.

"So, it will be interesting to see over the next couple of years if bowlers are able to pull this back a little bit in T20s," Dravid said.

But is it possible for bowlers to pull things back if the pitches are as flat as they have been in recent times? Dravid agreed that some help is needed for the bowlers.

"They may need a little bit of support and I think the way is probably to have a little more challenging wickets to ensure that there are something in it for the bowlers, whether it is the tracks that turn or whether it is a little bit more pace and bounce that give the bowlers a little bit more of a chance.

Movies Schedule

Wednesday, 13th May

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | BHOOTH BANGLA (U/A16+) Hindi - 10:45 AM, 06:30 PM | |
| | Michael (U/A 13+) English with English Subtitles 11:45 AM, 02:00 PM | |
| | The Devil Wears Prada 2 (A) English with English Subtitles 03:00 PM | |
| | Dhurandhar: The Revenge (A) Hindi - 02:05 PM | |
| | THE SHEEP DETECTIVES (UA 7+) English - 04:45 PM | |
| | DAADI KI SHADI (U) Hindi - 11:05 AM, 07:05 PM | |
| | MORTAL KOMBAT II (A) English Atmos with English Subtitles 06:00 PM | |

TICKETS AT FLAT

₹92

₹199

RECLINER & ROYALE CLUB

INOX

SRINAGAR

Call: 95416 13868

For assistance with tickets

ADMIT ONE

013568