



Terror needs money, networks, support systems to survive: LG Sinha

» Asks people to work with resolve, efficiency to rid J&K of fear, terrorism

» Hands over appointment letters to newly appointed JKP constables

Yogesh

Jammu, May 20: Asserting that terror needs money, networks, and support systems to survive, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Wednesday called upon the people to work with resolve and efficiency to rid Jammu and Kashmir of fear and terrorism.

While presenting appointment letters to newly appointed constables of Jammu & Kashmir Police here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Terror does not sustain itself; it needs money, networks, and support systems. Using the full force of the law, we must trace and



neutralize sources of funding. We must identify every network and dismantle every support system completely."

The Lieutenant Governor said that everyone should work with resolve and efficiency to rid Jammu Kashmir

of fear and terrorism. The Lieutenant Governor urged the new recruits to dedicate themselves to defending

the unity and integrity of the motherland and to strengthen the proud legacy of this force.

"We must remain constantly alert and vigilant. The nature of law & order threats and terrorism has evolved, demanding a constant, unyielding vigilance and alert to threats that hide in plain sight," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said that new recruits must work as a team because the threats Jammu Kashmir confronts demand cooperation between different agencies.

"When we share information, plan strategies, and confront the enemy together, we build capacities that no single institution can create alone. India has | More on P6

PM Modi receives prestigious FAO Agricola Medal



PTI

Rome, May 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on Wednesday conferred with the prestigious FAO Agricola Medal by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations in recognition of his contribution to food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Modi, who arrived in Italy on Tuesday night on the concluding leg of his five-nation tour, received the award from Dr Qu Dongyu, Director-General of FAO at the UN body's headquarters in Rome.

Modi said that the honour reflects India's unwavering commitment to food security, sustainable development and the hard work of those associated with the agriculture sector.

"This is an honour to India's millions of farmers, livestock rearers, fish farmers, agricultural scientists, and workers. This is also an honour to India's unwavering commitment, at the centre of which lies human welfare, food security, and

Sustainable Development," he said.

The FAO Agricola Medal is one of the highest honours awarded by the FAO to distinguished individuals who have played an exceptional role in advancing efforts toward global food security, improved nutrition and agricultural development.

Highlighting the centrality of agrarian life in India, PM Modi emphasised that agriculture was a sacred bond between Mother Earth and the Indian people.

In his address, Modi said technology is becoming the new strength of Indian Agriculture.

"We believe that the future of farming is not solely about "Producing More," but about "Producing Better." Guided by this vision, we are focusing on enhancing bio-diversity and reducing reliance on chemical fertilisers," he said.

Modi said India's experience demonstrates to the world that scale and sustainability can go hand in hand. "When technology and | More on P6

Jammu sizzles above normal, rain alert issued for Kashmir

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, May 20: Heatwave continued to sweep parts of Jammu division on Wednesday as the Meteorological Department forecast thunderstorms, gusty winds and hailstorms across Jammu and Kashmir over the next two days.

According to the Meteorological Centre Srinagar, scattered to many places in both Kashmir and Jammu divisions are likely to witness light rain, thundershowers and gusty winds during the afternoon and evening hours on May 21. The weather office also issued an advisory warning of thunder, lightning, hailstorm and gusty winds with speeds of 40-50 kmph, gusting to over 60 kmph, at a few places during the period.

Officials informed the news agency—Kashmir News

Observer (KNO) that generally dry weather is expected between May 22 and 25, although isolated to scattered areas may receive brief afternoon showers. The weather is likely to remain hot and dry from May 26 to 28.

Jammu recorded a maximum temperature of 42 degrees Celsius on Wednesday, nearly four degrees above normal, while Kathua emerged as the hottest place in the Union Territory at 43.8 degrees Celsius, around 5.7 degrees above normal.

Samba also recorded intense heat with the mercury settling at 45.7 degrees Celsius.

In Kashmir division, Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 30.7 degrees Celsius, 5.3 degrees above normal for this time of the season. Qazigund settled at 30.2 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara recorded 28.3 degrees Celsius. | More on P6

NASHA MUKT J&K ABHIYAN

Police intensify campaign, make arrests, demolish property, attach vehicles

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, May 20: Jammu and Kashmir Police on Wednesday intensified the ongoing "Nasha Mukh J&K Abhiyan" across Kashmir by destroying illegal poppy cultivation, arresting five alleged drug peddlers, attaching properties and vehicles linked to narcotics trade, and launching awareness programmes in several districts.

A Police official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that illegal poppy cultivation was destroyed in Anantnag, Baramulla and Handwara during coordinated operations carried out with the assistance of magistrates and officials from the Excise, Revenue



and Agriculture departments. ANANTNAG, BARAMULLA, HANDWARA

"In Anantnag district, police destroyed illegally cultivated poppy crops at Batagund Verinag and registered FIR No. 76/2026 under relevant

sections of law at Dooru police station," the official said, adding, "In Baramulla, police along with officials from the Excise and Agriculture departments conducted operations in Tangmarg and Kunzer areas, where | More on P6

Army's Northern Command Chief visits Rajouri Reviews security situation along LoC

Yogesh

Jammu, May 20: General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GoC-in-C) of the Indian Army's Northern Command, Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma, on Wednesday reviewed the prevailing security situation and operational preparedness of troops along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu's and Rajouri district.

Army's Udhampur based Northern Command in a post on X, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said, "Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, reviewed the prevailing security situation and operational preparedness of the forward areas of Sunderbani Sector along the LoC." "He interacted with the



troops, including personnel from the BSF, commending them for their battle-hardened resilience, indomitable courage and unwavering commitment to duty. He encouraged all for rapid absorption of emerging

technologies with an aim to up-skill and always remain combat ready," the post read.

Pertinently, Jammu and Kashmir has a 740-km-long LoC located in Rajouri, Poonch and parts of | More on P6

J&K-Ladakh HC announces virtual hearings

PTI

Srinagar, May 20: The High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh on Wednesday announced the adoption of virtual hearings and hybrid working arrangements as part of fuel conservation measures following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal.

A circular issued by the high court's registrar general said the measures have been adopted in view of the nationwide call for adoption of measures relating to "economic self-defence" amid concerns arising from rising crude oil prices and energy security.

The measures would remain in force until further orders, it said.

"With effect from 21.05.2026, the high court shall encourage virtual hearings and virtual appearance by learned counsel, subject to observance of the decorum and protocol prescribed for virtual proceedings," the circular said.

It said that during the vacation period commencing on June 8, the nominated vacation benches shall deal with the matters coming before them through virtual mode.

"However, learned advocates who, for some unavoidable reasons, are unable to participate via video conferencing mode may appear physically before the hon'ble court(s) whenever it is functioning | More on P6

Panchayat Electoral Rolls 2026 finalised

Voter count crosses 72.24 lakh after 3.39 lakh new enrolments

KT News Desk

Jammu, May 20: The State Election Commission, Jammu & Kashmir, has concluded the annual revision of Panchayat Electoral Rolls with the publication of the Final Panchayat Electoral Rolls 2026, fixing April 1, 2026 as the qualifying date.

The comprehensive exercise, which began with the release of the Draft Electoral Roll on March 27, 2026, has now formally culminated following a structured schedule of claims, objections and verification.

The Commission had opened a 40-day window for filing claims and objections from March 27 to May 5, 2026. All submissions received during this period were examined and disposed of by Electoral Registration Officers by May 14, 2026. With the completion of this process, the Final Electoral Rolls were published today, May 21, 2026, setting the groundwork for the upcoming



panchayat elections across the Union Territory.

The revision drive recorded significant voter activity. A total of 3,39,384 new voters were added to the rolls while 1,13,344 names were deleted due to death, shifting, duplication, and other admissible reasons. In addition, corrections were carried out in the particulars of 17,664 voters, and 31,590 voters were transposed. The final roll now stands at 72,24,131 electors, which includes 36,62,502 male, 35,61,488 female, and 141 Third | More on P6

Muslims, Sikhs perform last rites of elderly Kashmiri Pandit woman in Tral 'We celebrate together, mourn together; this is real identity of Kashmir'

Jahangeer Ganaie

Pulwama May 20: In a touching example of communal harmony and brotherhood, residents of Midora village in Tral sub-division of Pulwama district came together to perform the last rites of an elderly Kashmiri Pandit woman, reaffirming the Valley's centuries-old tradition of coexistence and mutual respect among communities.

The woman, identified as Jigar Devi, passed away on

Tuesday. With only a few members of the Pandit community left in the area, local Muslims and Sikhs stepped forward to ensure that her cremation rituals were carried out with dignity and respect on Wednesday.

Eyewitnesses told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that people from different communities assembled early in the morning to assist the bereaved family, arrange the funeral procession, and participate in the last



rites. The atmosphere in the village was marked by grief, solidarity, and a strong sense of shared humanity.

Residents said the gesture reflected the true spirit of Kashmiriyat — the traditional ethos of communal harmony, compassion, and brotherhood that has long defined Kashmiri society.

Mehraj Ahmad, a Muslim resident of Midora, said the entire village considered it their moral responsibility to stand with the family in their

hour of grief "Death and grief belong to humanity, not to any one religion. Jigar Devi was part of our village and our family. It was our duty to help perform her last rites with honour and respect," he said.

Shafiq Ahmad, another neighbour, said such moments send a powerful message of unity at a time when society often witnesses division and mistrust. "People here have lived together for generations. We celebrate together, and we

mourn together. This is the real identity of Kashmir," he added. Members of the Sikh community who participated in the cremation rites also described the gesture as a reflection of shared human values.

Parmeet Singh, a resident of nearby Naner village, said the area stood united irrespective of religious identity. "In times of sorrow, humanity comes first. We did not see her as belonging to one community; she belonged to all of us. Standing together in | More on P6

Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani inspects development works in Jammu

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MAY 20: Advisor to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani, Wednesday conducted a comprehensive on-site review of the New Legislative Complex at Jammu besides inspecting the development works in the region.

The visit, as per an official statement, was aimed to inspect the ongoing construction work and ensure that all state-of-the-art infrastructural amenities aligned with global standards for Legislative efficiency are being adhered to by the executing agency. The Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Project Division-II presented the overview of the project, floor-wise facilities being constructed, details of enhanced seating capacity of Assembly Hall, construction of central hall, external finishing etc.

During the visit, the Advisor toured the central assembly hall, review the administrative chambers and the surrounding public utility spaces. Emphasizing the government's commitment towards reinforcing democratic infrastructure in the Union Territory, the Advisor directed the executing agency to expedite the remaining finishing works and complete the project well within the specified time limit. He underscored that timely completion of the modern complex is vital for the smooth functioning



of future democratic proceedings and convenience of public representatives.

"Robust infrastructure is the backbone of effective governance. This new complex is not merely a building; it is a symbol of democratic ethos and must be completed promptly with uncompromising quality," said the Advisor during the inspection.

Nasir Aslam interacted with the senior engineers of PWD(R&B) Jammu and Mechanical Engineering Department, taking detailed stock of the structural and technical specifications of the project. He instructed the authorities to ensure seamless integration of advanced IT infrastructure, modern acoustics and enhanced security systems within the premises including

e-Vidhan.

The upcoming New Legislative Complex is designed to provide a highly accessible, eco-friendly and technologically advanced environment for the lawmakers with facilities like e-Vidhan. With the expedited timeline, the administration aims to facilitate an enhanced working environment for the region's representatives.

The Advisor was accompanied by senior officials from the civil administration. Later, Nasir Aslam inspected various ongoing developmental works in Jammu along with Chief Engineer PWD (R&B), Jammu, Rajesh Augustam, Superintending Engineer, Chief Medical Officer Jammu and other senior officers.

During the visit, the Advisor reviewed the permanent

restoration work of the approach road to the 4th Tawi Bridge, Jammu. The senior officers informed that the project has been allotted at an estimated cost of ₹14.59 crore with a stipulated completion period of 12 months. The restoration work is aimed at improving the connectivity and ensuring smooth traffic movement in the area.

Nasir Aslam also inspected repair and renovation works being carried out at Yatri Niwas Bhagwati Nagar in view of the upcoming Shri Amarnath Yatra. The project included construction of temporary sheds and hangars for Yatris and langars besides laying of bitumen in parking areas and internal roads. The works are being executed at an estimated cost of ₹1.59 crore with a completion period of one and a half months.

The Advisor also inspected another major project envisaging construction of a 105-meter span prestressed RCC bridge over Balole Nalla at Gadi Garh. The Advisor was informed that the bridge work has been completed at an estimated cost of ₹7.2 crore within 24 months. During the inspection, the Chief Engineer PWD (R&B), Jammu briefed the Advisor about the ongoing preparations and infrastructure works related to the Shri Amarnath Yatra, particularly the arrangements being undertaken by the PWD (R&B) Division Satwari.

Migrant Transit Accommodation

DC Srinagar reviews construction progress

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MAY 20: Deputy Commissioner(DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo Wednesday undertook a visit to Zewan area of District to oversee the progress of ongoing works being executed on construction of Migrant Transit Accommodation for PM Package Employees.

He also inspected progress of works on the new Revenue Complex to house Tehsil Office Panthachowk.

During the visit, the DC, as per an official statement, was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Aadil Fareed, IAS Probationer, Alfred Thomas, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintending Engineer R&B, Tatheer Manzoor, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar, Executive Engineer R&B, Executive Engineer PDD, Executive Engineer PHE, Tehsildar Panthachowk and other concerned Officers.

While reviewing the status of works at the Migrant Transit Accommodation site at Zewan, the Deputy Commissioner was informed that the project comprises of 39 accommodation blocks with a total of 936 flats. Out of these, construction of



33 blocks has been completed, while finishing works on the remaining six blocks are progressing steadily.

He was further apprised that allied infrastructure works including boundary wall, dormitory, security pickets, community hall, pipe

culverts and interior roads has already been completed. In addition, installation of all 39 distribution transformers and related power infrastructure has been setup, while water supply to the accommodation facility has also been made functional.

Union Territory Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION SOPORE.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

NIT No:- 11 of RnB-Sopore of 2026-2027 e-tendering DATED 20.05.2026.

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K, e-tenders (in Single Cover System) are invited on Percentage rate basis from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K State Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:

S. No.	Name of Work	Adv. cost	Cost of Tender Documents In Rupees	E/ Money	Time for completion of work	Time & Date of Opening of Bid	Class of Contractor	M. H of Account	Position of TS
1	Development of Children park at Nowpora Tujjar Sharief.(civil part)	67.14	1600/-	134280/-	06 Months	05.06.2026	AAV	Capex Budget 2025-26 component Tourism works plan	SE (R&B) Bla 19 of 2026-27 dated:18.05.2026 Rs. 67.14 lacs

Project Authority:

Tourism Deptt.

Position of funds:

Available

Position of AA:

Accorded by Deputy Director Tourism planning Kashmir

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	20.05.2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	20.05.2026 to 04.06.2026
3	Bid Submission start date	20.05.2026
4	Bid submission End date	04.06.2026 (4.00 PM)
5	Date and time of opening of bides (online)	05.06.2026(12 PM) in the office of Ex. Engineer R&B Division, Sopore

2, Bids must be accompanied by a Treasury Challan (dated between the bid start date and the Bid Submission End date) with NIT No. Name of work and S.No. deposited in M.H. 0059 in the name of Executive Engineer R&B Division Sopore (tender inviting authority) as the cost of the tender document.

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/BG pledged to the tender receiving authority, i.e. Executive Engineer R&B Division Sopore. Besides that, 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 after submission of a performance security of 5% of the quoted cost which will be released after completion of the DLP/Maintenance Period.

3(b) Geotag Photographs Minimum 03 sets (01 set comprising of Photograph before, during and after execution of work) of size 26 cm x 21 cm to be provided.

Unbalanced Bid:- In case bid of the successful bidder is unbalanced, the Successful bidder will have to provide additional performance security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Sopore (tender receiving authority) vide Principal Secretary to Government Finance department's circular issued under endorsement No: DF-Code/ 44/1/ 2021-02-158 dated" 8.8.20025.

a. 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.

b. 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.

c. 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.

d. 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. The additional performance security shall be released only after successful completion of work.

4 The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same web site in the office of the Tender receiving authority).

5, The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of technical Bids.

6, Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

6.1, Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in acquaint bid submission process.

For and on behalf of the
Lt. Governor of J&K UT,

DIPK-1494/26

Dated: 20-05-2026

No 1725-34
Dated: 20.05.2026.

SD/
Executive Engineer,
R&B Division Sopore

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR, OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI PHE MECHANICAL DIVISION SRINAGAR

e-Mail: xen-phemds@jk.gov.in

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

e-NIT No: JSMDS/e-NIT- 09 of 05/2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Mechanical Division, Srinagar, invites tenders by e-tendering mode from registered Electrical Firms/License holders for execution of the following work:-

S. No.	Name of the work	Estimate cost (in Rs)	EMD in (Rs)	Time of completion	Head Of Account
01	Repair works for 12.5 HP open-well submersible motor at WSS LD Stage Ist. (S. No. 48938)	33,791/-	700/-	15 days	2210 Non Plan GMC (M&R)

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	20-05-2026
2.	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 21-05-2026 (10:00 a.m.) to 30-05-2026 (upto 04:00 pm)
3.	Period of submitting of bids (online)	From 21-05-2026 (10:00 a.m.) to 30-05-2026 (upto 04:00 pm)
4.	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	01-06-2026 (02.00 P.M) in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Mechanical Division Srinagar
5.	Date & time of opening of Financial Bids (Online)	After evaluation of technical bid(s)

The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, and specifications, 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 The Bids Technical bid and financial bid shall be deposited in electronic format on the departmental website. www.jktenders.gov.in

No: JSMDS/CC/642-45
Dated: 20/05/2026

DIPK-1468/26

Dated: 20-05-2026

Sd/
Executive Engineer,
Jal Shakti PHE Mechanical Division
Srinagar.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR, OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR LAW ENFORCEMENT, KASHMIR

Message for Farmers

All the orchardists/farming community of the valley are advised not to Purchase/ use the below mentioned batch Nos of pesticide products in their fields, which has been declared as Misbranded by the Quality Control Laboratory Lalmandi Srinagar. The details of Misbranded Pesticide products are as under:-

S.No	Name of the Products	Active Ingredient	Batch No	Date of Manufacture	Date of Expiry	Manufactured/ Marketed by
1	Buzz	Tebuconazole 25% WG	SS-0165	28.07.2025	27.07.2027	Sumil Industries Ltd
2	Tussle	Tebuconazole 10% & Sulpur 65 % WG	A023425H01	15.08.2025	14.08.2027	M/S Sulphur Mills Ltd.

All the Enforcement Officers/ Inspectors are directed to seize stocks of the above said pesticide product under Batch No: SS-0165 & A023425H01 proceed further as per the provisions of Insecticides Act-1968 and Rules made there under.

DIPK-1466/26

Dated: 20-05-2026

Sd/
Deputy Director Law Enforcement
Kashmir

Sakeena Itoo presides renaming ceremony of GHS Hapatnar

School renamed as Shaheed Adil Hussain Shah Memorial GHS Hapatnar

KT NEWS DESK

Anantnag, May 20: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo on Wednesday presided the renaming ceremony of Government High School (GHS) Hapatnar as Shaheed Adil Hussain Shah Memorial High School Hapatnar.

MLA Pahalgam Altaf Ahmad Wani (Kaloo); Director Social Welfare Kashmir, Director School Education Kashmir, Director Health Services Kashmir, CMO, CEO, other senior officers of district administration, family members of Shaheed Adil Hussain and large number of locals were also present on the occasion.

Addressing a large gathering, the Minister paid rich tributes to Shaheed Adil and said that the renaming of the institution is a humble tribute to the courage, sacrifice and patriotism displayed by the martyr. She added that the sacrifice of brave son of the soil will not be forgotten and Shaheed Adil will be remembered in our hearts, as this school is dedicated in his name to recognise his sacrifice.

Calling Shaheed Adil Hussain as national hero, Sakeena Itoo said that Government is committed to support the family in every possible manner. "Everyone



remembers martyr Adil Sahib. Along with Jammu and Kashmir, he has left his mark across the country. No one can ever forget the sacrifice he made," Sakeena Itoo said. The Minister recalled that Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah and former Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah had promised the family that the school would be renamed after the martyr, adding that the government fulfilled the promise within a year.

The Minister emphasized that educational

institutions play a vital role in shaping the future of society and renaming the school after Shaheed Adil would serve as a constant source of inspiration for students and youth of the area. She urged the students to work hard with commitment, discipline and contribute positively towards nation-building and social progress. Highlighting the government's commitment towards strengthening the education sector across Jammu and Kashmir, the Minister

said that several initiatives are being undertaken to improve educational infrastructure, enhance learning facilities and provide quality education to students, particularly in rural and far-flung areas.

She further said that the Omar Abdullah-led Government is focused on ensuring inclusive and equitable development across all sectors with special attention towards education, healthcare and social welfare.

MLA Pahalgam, Altaf Ahmad Wani (Kaloo) also spoke on the occasion.

The Minister also interacted with students and teaching staff and appreciated the efforts of the school administration in promoting quality education in the region.

During the visit, the Minister also interacted with local residents and family members of Shaheed Adil Hussain, and paid rich tributes to the martyr.

The locals also raised various public issues before the Minister and sought their immediate redressal. She assured them that their genuine demands will be addressed. On the occasion, a short movie was also played in the memory of Shaheed Adil Hussain Shah highlighting his braveness, besides lectures were delivered, praising the boldness and his human nature of Shaheed Adil Hussain.

Govt accords approval of renaming several schools after eminent personalities, martyrs

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 20: The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has sanctioned the naming of several schools after eminent personalities and martyrs in recognition of their outstanding contributions, legacy and supreme sacrifices.

The decision has been taken in pursuance of the 7th Council of Ministers meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

Government Higher Secondary School, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu, has been renamed after Late Principal Kuldeep Kumar Badyal, while Government High School, Hapatnar in Anantnag district, has been named after Late Adil Hussain Shah.

Adil Hussain Shah earned widespread admiration for his courage and selflessness during the Baisaran attack, where he helped tourists to safety and laid down his life for humanity.

The government stated that the initiative is aimed at honouring the memory and legacy of distinguished personalities and martyrs who have rendered notable service and sacrifice for society.

PDP must reveal who helped BJP enter J&K: Rahim Rather



NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIEE

Budgam, May 20: Senior National Conference (NC) leader and MLA Chrar-e-Sharief, Abdul Rahim Rather on Wednesday targeted the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) over the abrogation of Article 370, saying the party must answer how the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) managed to gain a foothold in the region after 2014.

Speaking to media persons in Chadoora area of Budgam district, Rather said that the BJP had never hidden its agenda regarding Article 370 and Article 35A.

"They created this situation precisely—they engineered the entire scenario. Which party abolished statehood? Which party abrogated Article 370 and removed Article 35A? This had been the BJP's agenda all along," he said.

He said the BJP had openly declared that it would revoke Article 370 if voted to power. "They never concealed this intention. They came to power and implemented what they

had promised," Rather, also the Speaker of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, said.

Taking a dig at the PDP, the senior NC leader said the people of Jammu and Kashmir should judge who facilitated the BJP's entry into the region. "For 40 to 50 years, the BJP could not establish a foothold here. Then what happened after 2014 that they managed to enter? I do not blame the BJP because they were clear about their agenda. The real question is—who helped them? PDP should answer this," he added.

Earlier, Rather inaugurated a newly constructed bridge at Chowdarygund over Nallah Apzari in Chadoora area of Budgam district. The bridge project, executed by the PW(R&B) Department Division Chadoora, was started in January 2023 at a cost of around Rs 4.75 crore.

Locals expressed happiness over the completion of the bridge, saying it would improve connectivity and ease transportation for residents, especially during rainy seasons and bad weather—(KNO)

Italian, Bulgarian cherries fetch Rs 200-300 per kg in Kashmir



JAHANGEER GANAIEE

Srinagar, May 20: The cultivation of imported cherry varieties from Italy and Bulgaria is emerging as a profitable venture for growers in Kashmir, with farmers reporting encouraging market prices and improved resistance to erratic weather conditions compared to traditional cultivars.

While the Valley's conventional cherry varieties are yet to arrive in markets, the early-ripening imported cultivars have already begun generating returns for orchardists in several districts, particularly in Pulwama and Shopian.

Growers said that the imported cherries are currently selling between Rs 200 and Rs 300 per kilogram in local markets, giving much-needed financial relief to orchardists after years of fluctuating prices and weather-related losses. Asif Ahmad, a cherry grower from Pulwama, said that despite a decline in overall production this year, the rates have remained favourable, raising hopes among farmers.

"This season, the crop is much less compared to normal years, but the prices are quite encouraging," Ahmad said. "Both

imported and traditional Siyah varieties are fetching good rates in the market. If prices continue to remain stable, growers may be able to recover some of the losses caused by the lower production."

He said the imported varieties have also helped farmers diversify their orchards and reduce risks linked to unpredictable weather patterns. "The biggest advantage is that these cherries are more resistant to light rainfall. Traditional cherries can crack very quickly after rain, which affects their quality and market value," he added.

Irfan Ahmad, a grower from Shopian, said the staggered harvesting pattern of the imported cultivars is proving beneficial for growers as it prevents market oversupply.

"Traditional varieties usually ripen together within a short period, forcing growers to sell quickly before the fruit perishes," Irfan Ahmad said. "But the imported varieties mature in phases, which ensures a continuous supply to the market and helps maintain better prices."

He added that the longer harvesting season has also created additional employment opportunities for labourers associated with

cherry orchards. "Earlier, the harvesting season would last only a few weeks, but now the work extends for nearly two months because of these imported varieties. It benefits both orchard owners and workers," he said.

President of the Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers and Dealers Union, Bashir Ahmad Basheer, said the market response this year has been positive despite a noticeable decline in production.

"This year's cherry output is nearly 50 per cent less than the normal production due to weather-related factors, but the market rates are very good," Basheer said. "If the prices continue at this level during the peak season, it will help growers compensate for the losses caused by the reduced yield." He said growers are optimistic as traditional varieties, including Makhmal, Siyah, Awal Number, Jodi, Holland, Double, Mishry, Splendor and Steela are expected to arrive in markets in the coming weeks.

Basheer further stated that although imported varieties currently occupy a smaller share in Kashmir's cherry industry, their popularity is steadily increasing because of their weather tolerance and better market timing. According to official figures, Jammu and Kashmir produces more than 1.5 lakh metric tonnes of cherries annually, making it the leading cherry-producing region in India. More than 2,300 hectares of land in the Union Territory are presently under cherry cultivation, with Shopian, Srinagar and Ganderbal among the major producing districts—(KNO)

No 'genuine' houses touched in Jammu anti-encroachment drives: Ashok Koul

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, May 20: Jammu and Kashmir Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) general secretary Ashok Koul on Wednesday said the ongoing anti-encroachment drives in Jammu are being carried out strictly against illegal occupations of government and forest land, asserting that no genuine residential structures have been touched during the process.

Speaking during a party function in Srinagar, BJP's Ashok Koul said the exercise is part of a lawful process aimed at removing unauthorised encroachments from state and forest land.

"No house of genuine residents has been touched. Action is being taken against those who have encroached on government or forest land without permission," he said.

Koul said the drive is not arbitrary but is being conducted in accordance with legal and judicial directions issued in 2020, which are now being implemented on the ground as part of a structured exercise to retrieve public land.

"The court directions issued in 2020 are being implemented now," he said, adding that such steps are necessary to ensure



protection of public resources and prevent further illegal occupation of land meant for public use.

The BJP leader said the ongoing action is focused only on unlawful constructions and encroachments, and reiterated that the interests of genuine residents have been fully safeguarded.

He further said the recent political engagement and joining of new members reflect a visible shift in public sentiment. "We welcome everyone who is joining the Bharatiya Janata Party. This shows that the party is growing in Jammu and Kashmir, especially in Kashmir," he said.

Koul added that the BJP would continue to organise such outreach programmes across the Valley in the

coming days.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent public appeals on reducing unnecessary expenditure and promoting conservation, Koul said these suggestions were aimed at long-term national benefit.

"Whatever Modi Ji has said should be implemented by the people. During COVID, the Prime Minister provided free rations, which are continuing. He always thinks ahead for the country," he said. The BJP leader referred to calls for reducing fuel consumption and limiting the use of certain commodities, describing them as measures linked to both economic prudence and public health awareness—(KNO)

Where were authorities when structures were raised: Dy CM



WARIS FAYAZ

Uri, May 20: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary on Wednesday termed the demolition of houses belonging to tribal families in Sidra area of Jammu as "unfortunate" and said such actions should not have taken place.

Speaking to reporters during his visit to Uri in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, Choudhary said the issue was not linked to any religion or community, but concerned humanity and the right of poor people to shelter. He said people construct their homes after facing immense hardships and questioned why the authorities failed to act when the structures were allegedly being raised if the land belonged to the forest department.

"If the construction was illegal on forest land, it could not have come up overnight. Where were the concerned departments at that time?" he asked, while strongly condemning the demolition drive.

Continued on
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Youth jumps into Jhelum from Budshah Bridge

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, May 20: A youth allegedly jumped into the river Jhelum from Budshah Bridge in Lal Chowk area here on Wednesday late evening, officials said.

They said the rescue operation has now been suspended for the night, while the identity of the person is yet to be confirmed.

Officials said that the individual is reportedly a young male, though there is no official confirmation



regarding his identity so far. An official said that soon after

the incident, police teams rushed to the spot, while SDRF and River Police were pressed into service to launch a search and rescue operation in the river.

Despite sustained efforts through the evening, the individual could not be traced. The operation was later suspended due to darkness and adverse conditions.

"Search and rescue operation will resume with first light on Thursday morning," the official said—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

Time To Wake Up To Hypertension

The numbers are alarming. Only 36 per cent of women and 31 per cent of men in Jammu and Kashmir have normal blood pressure levels. Nearly 57 per cent of the population falls in the pre-hypertensive category, a warning sign before full-blown hypertension sets in. These figures from the National Family Health Survey-5 are a public health emergency knocking on every door. Hypertension is called the silent killer for a reason. It develops without noticeable symptoms. No

fever. No pain. No visible warning. But silently, it damages the heart, brain, kidneys and blood vessels. By the time symptoms appear, the damage is often irreversible. Heart attacks, strokes, and kidney failure—these are not distant possibilities. They are the real consequences of ignoring high blood pressure. What is worse is that hypertension is no longer a disease of the elderly. Doctors warn that adolescents and even school-going children are now being diagnosed. Sedentary lifestyles,

excessive screen time, lack of outdoor activity, stress, and unhealthy eating habits are pushing young people into the danger zone. The government cannot afford to treat this as a minor health issue. It must launch a mass awareness campaign across schools, colleges, workplaces and community centres. People need to know that hypertension is not a death sentence. It can be controlled. Regular blood pressure screening, reducing salt and oil intake, daily physical activity, avoiding tobacco

and alcohol, and managing stress can save lives. Doctors recommend that every adult get their blood pressure checked at least once a year. Those above 30 need regular screening even without symptoms. Schools should include annual blood pressure checks in their health programmes. Early detection can prevent thousands of deaths from cardiovascular diseases. But awareness alone is not enough. The health department must ensure that screening facilities are available in every block and

that treatment is accessible and affordable. Four out of five hypertensive patients do not keep their blood pressure under control. This is unacceptable. The people of Kashmir must also take responsibility. Cut down on salt. Walk instead of sitting. Reduce screen time. Get your blood pressure checked regularly. Hypertension does not announce itself. By the time it speaks, it may be too late. Wake up. Check your numbers. Take control. Your heart will thank you.

India's Evolving Metrology Ecosystem Strengthening Trade, Transparency, And Consumer Protection

Press Information Bureau

India's evolving metrology ecosystem is strengthening fair trade, consumer protection, industrial quality, and global competitiveness. The Legal Metrology Act, 2009 anchors a modern regulatory structure that has evolved from ancient systems of weights and measures. Institutions like the National Physical Laboratory and Regional Reference Standard Laboratories support national measurement standards and verification systems. Initiatives like eMaap Portal, One Nation One Time, and authority to issue OIML certification are enhancing transparency, efficiency and consumer satisfaction. They are also supporting ease of trade through India's integration with global measurement and quality infrastructure.

Metrology: Building Trust in Trade through Measurement Science

Measurement forms the foundation of modern economic systems, industrial production, scientific advancement, and consumer protection. Standardized measurements ensure transparency and public trust across sectors such as trade, healthcare, infrastructure, telecommunications, energy distribution, and digital technologies. In this context, metrology, the science of measurement, and legal metrology, the regulation of measurements, ensure fairness in trade and commerce. Metrology establishes common standards for units and measuring instruments. These standardized units are established for various kinds of measurements used in the trade of commodities, like length, weight, volume, time, temperature, and other physical quantities. It has a wide range of applications, including in navigation, construction, product development, environmental monitoring, medicine, and food processing.

Metrology focuses on the science and accuracy of measurement. Legal metrology meanwhile focuses on ensuring accuracy and reliability in weights and measurements for public protection and fair trade. India has developed a comprehensive legal metrology framework through progressive legislative reforms, institutional strengthening, and digital governance initiatives. From ancient systems of weights and measures to the enactment of the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, India's measurement ecosystem is continuously evolving. The evolving framework seeks to address changing trade practices, emerging technologies, and growing consumer protection requirements.

World Metrology Day

World Metrology Day, observed annually on 20 May, highlights the importance of measurement science in modern society. This day was established in 1999 by the International Committee for Weights and Measures. It commemorates the signing of the Metre Convention on 20 May 1875. This convention laid the institutional and scientific foundation for a globally uniform and continuously evolving metric measurement system. The International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM) and the International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML) jointly coordinate the celebrations. The theme for this year, "Metrology: Building Trust in Policy Making," emphasizes metrology's role in evidence-based and transparent governance.

Metrology in Everyday Life: Ensuring Accuracy, Trust, and Fairness

Metrology significantly influences everyday life by ensuring accuracy, reliability, and fairness in routine transactions and public services. Legal metrology systems regulate various kinds of weighing and measuring instruments. These include instruments used in petrol pumps, grocery stores, jewellery shops, hospitals, electricity meters, water supply systems, packaged commodities. It ensures consumers receive the correct quantity and value for their purchases and services. These systems help prevent the delivery of lesser quantities, inaccurate billing, and unfair trade practices, thereby strengthening consumer confidence in daily commercial transactions.

Accurate measurement systems also contribute to public welfare and safety. Metrology ensures the standardization of technical instruments, measuring units, and machines used in service delivery. This ensures precise medical testing and diagnosis, reliable monitoring of electricity, water, and gas consumption, and effective road safety enforcement through speed-measuring devices. Thus, by maintaining uniform standards and verification mechanisms, metrology enhances trust, transparency,

and efficiency in everyday economic and public activities.

Ancient India's Measurement Heritage and Commercial Systems

Ancient India possessed a well-structured system of weights and measures. These played a significant role in trade, commerce, taxation, jewelry-making, agriculture, and everyday economic transactions. These systems were based on standardized units derived from seeds, grains, body measurements, and mathematical ratios. These practices evolved into organized and widely accepted commercial measurement standards.

Several standardized units were widely used in ancient India for commercial and practical purposes:

Rati: A small seed-based unit mainly used for weighing gold, gemstones, and other precious items.

Masha: A higher unit derived from a fixed number of Ratis.

Tola: A widely used unit for commercial transactions and precious metals.

Seer: A larger unit commonly used in trade and market transactions.

Maund and Candy: Large-scale units used for bulk trade, storage, and agricultural transactions.

Ancient Indian measurement practices also included:

Systems for measuring length, weight, and capacity.

Body-based measurements such as cubits and hand spans.

Use of binary, decimal, and octonary numerical systems for calculation and proportional division.

The Indus Valley Civilization had developed highly standardized measurement systems, reflecting advanced urban planning, trade, and architecture. During the Maurya Empire (322–185 BCE), organized systems of weights and measures were introduced for administration, taxation, and trade regulation. Later, Sher Shah Suri standardized weights and measures and introduced the Rupiya coin, which became the precursor to the modern rupee.

Evolution of India's Legal Metrology Framework

India's modern metrology journey began to take shape with the establishment of the National Physical Laboratory in 1947. This was followed by the enactment of the Standards of Weights and Measures Act, 1956, which established nationwide uniformity. India further strengthened global alignment by signing the Metre Convention and adopting the International System of Units (SI) during 1957–58. Subsequent legislative reforms, including the laws enacted in 1976 and 2009, further modernized and strengthened India's legal metrology framework.

International System of Units (SI)

SI units are internationally accepted standard units used for measurement worldwide. These units are defined using fixed scientific constants that never change. This ensures measurements remain accurate, uniform, and reliable everywhere in the world. Units such as metre, kilogram, and second are part of the SI system. The system helps maintain consistency in science, trade, industry, and daily life.

National Physical Laboratory-1947

The National Physical Laboratory (NPL) emerged as India's National Measurement Institute and the custodian of the national prototypes of the metre and kilogram. Regional Reference Standard Laboratories (RRSLs) were established to strengthen standardization and verification systems across states. These compare and verify standards used in laboratories and commercial trade activities.

Some Notable Achievements of the National Physical Laboratory (NPL)

India's NPL served as a founding member of the Asia Pacific Metrology Program (APMP). The APMP is a group of national metrology institutes from the Asia-Pacific region. They are engaged in improving regional metrological capability through the sharing of expertise and the exchange of technical services.

NPL has developed the globally recognized indelible ink. Used in elections across 37 countries, it symbolizes India's democratic impact on the world stage.

NPL has also established India's first certification facility for environmental monitoring equipment, a world-class solar cell calibration facility, and developed carbon composite materials for strategic sectors. These advancements not only enhance India's industrial and defense

capabilities but also align with the nation's renewable energy and sustainability goals.

Standards of Weights and Measures Act, 1956 and 1976

The Standards of Weights and Measures Act, 1956, was enacted to establish a uniform, scientific, and standardized system of measurements in India. It is based on the metric system and internationally accepted measurement standards. The legislation facilitated India's alignment with the SI Units and global legal metrology practices developed under the International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML), of which India is a member.

The Act was amended in 1976, leading to the enactment of Standards of Weights and Measures Act, 1976, which included:

Introduction of standardized numeration in accordance with the international form of Indian numerals.

Regulation of inter-state trade and commerce involving weights, measures, and packaged commodities.

Approval and standardization of weighing and measuring instruments.

Facilitation of the establishment of the Indian Institute of Legal Metrology for training inspectors and legal metrology officials.

Penalties and Punishments for violations related to weights and measures laws.

Legal Metrology Act, 2009

The Legal Metrology Act, 2009, was enacted to establish and enforce standards of weights and measures in India. The Act incorporates advancements in technology, modern trade practices, and evolving standards of measurement and standardization. The purpose was to regulate trade and commerce of goods sold by weight, measure, or number through a modern legal framework. Ensuring accuracy, transparency, and consumer protection in commercial transactions were the main objectives. The Act was implemented with effect from April 1, 2011. With its enforcement, the Standards of Weights and Measures Act, 1976, and the Standards of Weights and Measures (Enforcement) Act, 1985, were repealed.

Key Features of Legal Metrology Act, 2009 include:

Mandatory adoption of the metric system and standardized units of measurement across India.

Regulates weighing and measuring instruments used in trade and commercial transactions.

Requires verification and stamping of weights and measures prior to their commercial use.

Prescribes mandatory declarations for pre-packaged commodities, including details on quantity, weight, and measurement.

Provides registration for manufacturers, dealers, repairers, and importers of weighing instruments.

Empowers Legal Metrology Officers to undertake inspections, searches, seizures, and other enforcement actions.

Introduces penalties for the use of non-standard or unverified weights and measures.

Key Commodities Covered Under the Legal Metrology Act

The following are the key commodities included in the rules under the Legal Metrology Act:

Weighing Instruments: Weighing machines used in shops and markets must be verified and stamped by Legal Metrology authorities. This ensures consumers receive the correct quantity for the amount paid and prevents tampering or short weighing.

Packaged Commodities: Packaged goods such as food items, medicines, and household products must carry declarations related to quantity, MRP, manufacturing date, and manufacturer details. These declarations help consumers make informed choices and prevent misleading packaging practices.

Fuel Dispensers: Fuel dispensing machines at petrol pumps are regularly verified and calibrated. This ensures consumers receive the exact quantity of fuel displayed on the machine.

Water and Electricity Meters: Water and electricity meters must accurately record consumption to promote transparency and fairness in billing.

Clinical and Medical Instruments: Medical instruments such as thermometers, blood pressure monitors, and weighing machines are regulated under Legal Metrology laws. Accurate measurements are essential for proper diagnosis and treatment.

Telecommunications and Digital Services: Digital systems such as mobile networks,

internet services, and online payment platforms require highly accurate time and signal measurements. Precise measurement ensures smooth, reliable, and secure digital communication.

Electronics and Semiconductor Manufacturing: Electronic devices such as smartphones, laptops, and smart televisions depend on precision manufacturing. Metrology ensures accuracy during semiconductor production and supports the proper functioning of electronic products.

Rules Framed under this Act (2011 and 2013)

There are total of 7 rules framed under this Act governing different commodities:

The Legal Metrology (General) Rules: These cover around 40 types of weighing and measuring instruments, including electronic weighing machines, petrol pumps, weighbridges, water meters, clinical thermometers, and sphygmomanometers.

The Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules: These rules regulate the sale of pre-packaged goods and ensure that consumers receive clear information about the products before purchase.

The Legal Metrology (Approval of Models) Rules: These require manufacturers and importers of specified weighing and measuring instruments to obtain model approval from the government before manufacturing or importing such equipment.

The Legal Metrology (National Standards) Rules: Under these rules, National Prototypes and primary standards of weights and measures are maintained at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL).

The Legal Metrology (Numeration) Rules: Under these rules, provisions are made for making Numeration and the manner in which numbers shall be written.

Indian Institute of Legal Metrology Rules: The Indian Institute of Legal Metrology (IILM), Ranchi, functions as the training institute for Legal Metrology Officers in India. These rules prescribe provisions on training courses, the Institute's functions, and the qualifications required for admission to the Institute.

The Legal Metrology (Government Approved Test Centre) Rules: These rules are framed for the approval of GATCs established by private persons for the verification of certain weights and measures.

In alignment with these rules, states/UTs have also framed their Enforcement Rules.

These rules are amended from time to time to ensure they keep up with the evolving conditions of trade and technology. Recently, in October 2025, the scope of Government Approved Test Centres (GATCs) was expanded to include 18 categories of measuring instruments, including water meters, gas meters, energy meters, and sphygmomanometers.

Jan Vishwas Act, 2023, and Jan Vishwas Act, 2026

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023, introduced amendments to several laws across different Ministries, including the Legal Metrology Act, 2009. Under these reforms, seven sections of the Legal Metrology Act were decriminalized by replacing imprisonment provisions with monetary penalties in selected cases. The amendments to the Legal Metrology Act came into force on 1 October 2023. The reforms aim to improve ease of doing business, reduce compliance burden, and encourage voluntary compliance, while continuing to protect consumer interests and maintain accountability in trade and measurement systems.

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026, introduced reforms to reduce compliance burdens. It further promotes ease of doing business, particularly for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The amendments seek to encourage voluntary compliance by allowing businesses to rectify procedural lapses without facing immediate punitive action. Under the earlier provisions of the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, failure to maintain or produce prescribed records could attract direct penalties. The amendments introduce an "improvement notice" mechanism for first-time lapses. This allows MSME importers and businesses to rectify compliance gaps within a specified period before penalties are imposed. This reform reflects a shift towards trust-based governance, facilitative regulatory enforcement, and a business-friendly compliance framework.

Major Government Initiatives in Metrology and Legal Metrology

eMaap Portal

The eMaap portal, launched by the Department of Consumer Affairs, aims to enhance Ease of Doing Business and G2B service delivery. The portal simplifies and rationalizes rules and guidelines under the Legal Metrology Act. It uses information technology to enable efficient, transparent governance. The portal also integrates Legal Metrology systems of all States with the central platform. The portal provides online registration services nationwide to manufacturers, dealers, repairers, importers, packers, and producers of packaged commodities.

One Nation, One Time Initiative

India has launched the 'One Nation, One Time' initiative to disseminate Indian Standard Time (IST) with millisecond-to-microsecond accuracy across the country. The project is being implemented by the Department of Consumer Affairs in collaboration with the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) and ISRO through five Legal Metrology laboratories located across India.

The initiative aims to establish a uniform, highly precise time synchronization system across sectors such as telecommunications, banking, navigation, power grids, digital governance, 5G services, artificial intelligence, IoT, and scientific research. It also seeks to reduce dependence on foreign time sources such as GPS and strengthen national security, critical infrastructure management, accurate financial transactions, emergency response coordination, industrial efficiency, and reliable public services.

Strengthening Global Trade through OIML Certification Recognition

India became a member of the International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML) in 1956. In 2023, it became the 13th country globally authorized to issue internationally accepted OIML approval certificates for weighing and measuring instruments. This recognition enables Indian manufacturers to export instruments worldwide without additional international testing costs, while also strengthening India's role in global trade, standard-setting, and Legal Metrology governance.

The certification system, supported by Regional Reference Standard Laboratories (RRSLs), also allows India to provide certification services to foreign manufacturers, generate foreign exchange earnings, and contribute to international OIML policy and strategy development.

Measuring Sustainability: How Metrology Supports the SDGs

Metrology contributes significantly to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by ensuring accurate, reliable, and standardized measurements. It supports SDG 1 (No Poverty) by promoting fair trade practices, transparent pricing, and consumer protection through reliable measurement systems. Under SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), metrology strengthens healthcare systems through precise medical diagnostics, clinical measurements, and safe treatment practices. It advances SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) by enabling efficient energy distribution, renewable energy integration, and accurate energy monitoring and billing. Metrology also contributes to SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) by improving industrial quality, calibration, testing, and technological innovation. Furthermore, it supports SDG 13 (Climate Action) through accurate environmental monitoring, climate research, and scientific assessment of atmospheric and ecological changes.

Building a Transparent and Consumer-Centric Measurement Ecosystem

India's legal metrology framework continues to evolve in response to technological advancements, changing trade practices, and emerging consumer requirements. Recent initiatives undertaken by the Government have focused on reducing compliance burdens, ensuring uniform measurement standards, improving accuracy, and streamlining regulatory procedures through digital governance mechanisms.

Consumer protection measures have also been strengthened through mandatory declaration requirements on pre-packaged commodities and the introduction of country-of-origin disclosure provisions for e-commerce platforms, effective from 1 July 2027. Collectively, these reforms are contributing towards greater transparency, enhanced ease of doing business, stronger consumer confidence, and the development of India's overall quality infrastructure ecosystem.

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

Govt committed to ensure villages are provided facilities at par with cities: Deputy CM

Reviews progress of developmental works, availability of essential services in Stresses quality, timely execution of projects in Uri



KT News Desk

URI, MAY 20: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary on Wednesday chaired a meeting of senior officers at Officer's Club Uri to review the availability of essential services, basic facilities and progress of developmental works across the Uri Sub Division.

The meeting was attended by MLA Uri Dr. Sajjad Shafi, Chief Engineer R&B North Kashmir, Chief Engineer PMGSY, Additional Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Sub Divisional Magistrate Uri, Joint Director Mining and other senior officers of the district administration and line departments.

During the meeting, the Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, stressed the need for prompt service delivery, robust development and seamless public outreach

to ensure amicable redressal of genuine public grievances. He directed the officers to remain accessible to the people and ensure time-bound disposal of developmental and welfare issues.

Reviewing the progress on ongoing infrastructure projects, the Deputy Chief Minister emphasized quality execution and timely completion of works. He instructed the officers to conduct regular and random inspection of projects to ensure strict adherence to the prescribed guidelines and SOPs.

The Deputy Chief Minister also reviewed the status of road connectivity projects in Uri. He said that around 20 road projects have been undertaken in the area during the last one and a half years while additional projects are in the pipeline and will be taken up for execution soon.

He stressed that

developmental initiatives should ensure better connectivity and improved living standards for the people living in remote villages. He said that the government is committed to ensure that villages are provided facilities at par with cities so that local youth can realize their aspirations and dreams.

While reviewing the gypsum mining operations in the area, he stressed that mining activities should directly benefit the local communities and directed concerned officers to ensure transparency and environmental safeguards in all related operations.

The Deputy Chief Minister further instructed that the road works under SASCI and permanent restoration works should be expedited. He directed that mining funds be effectively utilized for road repairs and macadamization in the area.

Deputy CM visits Kaman Post, NHPC Power Project in Uri

KT News Desk

URI, MAY 20: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary on Wednesday visited the Kaman Post in Uri and reviewed the facilities and tourism potential of the border area.

During the visit, the Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, interacted with senior officers of army and inspected the Kaman Learning Centre, library and auditorium facilities established at the post.

He appreciated the efforts aimed at promoting awareness, education, and tourism in the border region.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Chief Minister said that Kaman Post holds immense significance as a major attraction for border tourism. He emphasized the need for strengthening tourism activities in the area for the economic benefit of local residents.

Later, Deputy Chief Minister visited the NHPC

power project in Uri and reviewed the functioning and power generation capacity of the vital hydroelectric project.

He interacted with senior officers and officials of the project and took stock of various operational aspects.

The Deputy Chief Minister stressed the importance of ensuring greater participation of local youth in national infrastructure and development projects.

He directed the concerned authorities to provide adequate employment opportunities to skilled and unskilled youth from the area, stating that such initiatives would significantly contribute towards sustainable livelihood generation and economic empowerment of local communities.

He reiterated the government's commitment towards inclusive development, strengthening border infrastructure, and creating better opportunities for the youth across Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaker JKLA inaugurates bridge at Chowdrigund, Chadoora



KT News Desk

BUDGAM, MAY 20: Marking a significant milestone for the regional infrastructure, Speaker Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, Wednesday officially inaugurated a newly constructed double lane 25-meter bridge with total width of 11.70 meter at Chowdrigund on Nallah Apzari, Chadoora.

The bridge, constructed with an estimated cost of 474.65 lakh, is set to drastically improve the local connectivity, ease commutes and stimulate economic activity in the region.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the Speaker, as per an official statement, emphasized that establishing a robust connectivity network is the cornerstone of sustainable growth. He reiterated the government's steadfast commitment to transform the regional landscape through strategic infrastructure projects.

"Connectivity is absolutely crucial for holistic development of our region," Speaker

Rather stated. "A bridge does more than connect two pieces of land; it links people to markets, healthcare, education and better opportunities. Our government is dedicated to ensure equitable development of all areas, ensuring that no region or community is left behind", he added.

The newly inaugurated double lane bridge addresses a long-standing demand of the local residents, promising to reduce travel time and provide all-weather access to essential services.

During the event, Rather assured the public that the government would continue to prioritize under-developed pockets, focusing on balanced progress, fair resource allocation and the timely completion of vital public welfare projects.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by SE R&B Erim Lone along with senior officials from R&B and PMGSY besides local dignitaries, and members of the community, who welcomed the development as a major step forward for the area.

One-Day Orientation cum training programme for PLVs of DLSA Srinagar, Budgam concludes

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, MAY 20: In compliance with the directions of the J&K Legal Services Authority, the District Legal Services Authority Budgam, in collaboration with the District Legal Services Authority Srinagar, organized a one-day Orientation cum Training Programme for Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) of DLSA Srinagar and Budgam at the ADR Centre, DLSA Srinagar.

The programme, as per an official statement, was conducted under the guidance of Haq Nawaz Zargar, Principal District & Sessions Judge, (Chairman DLSA) Srinagar; O.P. Baghat, Principal District & Sessions Judge, (Chairman DLSA) Budgam and under the supervision of Tabassum Qadir Parry, Secretary DLSA Srinagar/Budgam.

The initiative aimed at strengthening the role and functioning of Para Legal Volunteers at the grassroots level and enhancing their capacity in delivering legal aid and awareness services effectively. Chairman DLSA Srinagar, while addressing the participants, emphasized the vital role played by PLVs in ensuring access to justice for all sections of society, particularly the marginalized and vulnerable.

Chairman DLSA Budgam, joined the inaugural session virtually. In his keynote address, he directed the newly empanelled PLVs to work with dedication and stand for the constitutional values.

The welcome address was delivered by the Secretary DLSA Srinagar/Budgam.

During the technical sessions, distinguished speakers deliberated extensively on various important legal and social issues. Lateef Ahmad Khan, Chief LADC Budgam spoke on the role of Para Legal Volunteers in spreading legal awareness and facilitating access to justice for marginalized and vulnerable communities.

Similarly, Faheem, System Officer elaborated on recent developments in the Legal Services Delivery System and the use of technology for efficient functioning of DLSAs. He demonstrated practically step by step operations of e-court services.

Advocate Suhaila Ali, Panel Lawyer highlighted the importance of professional and sensitive interaction with litigants, beneficiaries, and government departments. Likewise, Nisar Ahmad Mir, PLV DLSA Budgam discussed the implementation of various NALSA schemes and outreach programmes at village and community levels.

Advocate Mir Naveed Gul delivered an insightful session on family laws, including marriage, maintenance, custody, guardianship, judicial separation, divorce, and inheritance matters. Minhaj, Assistant LADC Srinagar addressed criminal laws relating to bail, arrest, and the rights of prisoners.

The programme concluded with an interactive session involving active participation from the attendees. The participants appreciated the informative sessions and reaffirmed their commitment to serving society through legal awareness and assistance at the grassroots.

Shaleen Kabra takes stock of Jal Shakti Deptt preparedness for SANJY-2026

Reviews progress of JJM in Anantnag

KT News Desk

ANANTNAG, MAY 20: Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Jal Shakti, Shaleen Kabra Wednesday visited Anantnag and chaired a comprehensive review meeting with the concerned officers at the DC Office to assess the progress of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and irrigation schemes in the district besides taking stock of the Jal Shakti Department's preparedness for the ensuing Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2026.

Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, MD JJM, Director Planning, JSD, Chief Engineer, PHE/I&FC, Conservator of Forests South, ADC, CPO, Technical Officers, SE Hydraulics, Executive Engineers and Senior Officers of various engineering wings, DFOS, DMOs and other officers attended the meeting.

During the meeting, DC delivered a detailed presentation regarding the status of Water Supply Schemes under Jal Jeevan Mission in the district. It was informed that against a total of 1,32,915 rural households in the district, Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) have been provided to 1,23,516 households, achieving coverage of around 92.93 percent under the mission.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was informed



that a total of 369 schemes comprising 573 works are being executed, out of which 380 works and 250 schemes have been completed so far. Component-wise progress regarding pipe networks, RSFPs, OHTs and dug wells was also provided to the chair.

ACS also reviewed sector-wise Capex and Revex works proposed under SANJY 2026 in Jal Shakti sector and stressed upon timely allotment, execution and completion of works. Special focus was laid on the arrangements being made for Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra along the Pahalgam axis.

The officers briefed the ACS regarding infrastructure created and proposed enroute the Holy Cave, including provision of toilets, baths, PSPs, water supply infrastructure, service reservoirs, filtration plants and pipe networks at various locations including Nunwan, Chandanwari, Pissu

Top, Zojibal, Sheshnag and Panchtarni.

Reviewing the irrigation sector, the meeting discussed various bottlenecks affecting irrigation facilities in the district including siltation of canals, illegal mining, encroachments, pollution of water channels and tail-end deficits. The officers also apprised the chair about interventions being undertaken for restoration and strengthening of irrigation infrastructure, including desilting works, repair of canals, maintenance of lift irrigation schemes and NABARD-supported projects.

Shaleen Kabra emphasized timely completion of all ongoing works, maintenance of quality standards and optimum utilization of resources. He directed the concerned officers to strengthen monitoring mechanisms and ensure efficient implementation of schemes for the benefit of the public.

Mission Shakti Budgam organises Cyber Safety Awareness Programme at GDC Budgam



KT News Desk

BUDGAM, MAY 20: SANKALP Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW), Mission Shakti Budgam, under the aegis of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), organised an awareness programme on cyber safety in collaboration with the Cyber Police Station Budgam at Government Degree College (GDC) Budgam.

The programme, as per an official statement, was conducted under the supervision of Bilal Ahmad Mir, District Social Welfare Officer Budgam.

The awareness session aimed to educate students about cybercrime, online frauds, digital security, safe use of social media and preventive measures to ensure online safety. The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from students and faculty members of the college.

During the event, Afroza Ahad, District Mission Coordinator, Mission Shakti Budgam, highlighted the objectives and initiatives of Mission Shakti and stressed the importance of awareness among youth regarding the safe and

responsible use of digital platforms.

PW (ASI) Humayoon Kabir from Cyber Police Station Budgam delivered an informative session on emerging cyber threats, cyber bullying, online scams, phishing attacks and methods to safeguard personal information while using the internet and social media applications.

SI Suvaidd Bashir Wani from DTT DPL Budgam also addressed the participants and sensitised students about cyber laws, digital ethics, online safety practices and the importance of remaining vigilant against fraudulent online activities. He encouraged students to promptly report suspicious cyber incidents and use digital platforms responsibly.

The programme also featured a signature campaign and pledge under BBBP, promoting awareness, safety, dignity and responsible digital behaviour among youth. Informative pamphlets on cyber safety and online fraud prevention were distributed among the participants.

CS reviews sustainability plan for Industrial Biotech Parks in J&K

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MAY 20: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Wednesday reviewed the readiness, operational framework and future sustainability plan for the Industrial Biotech Parks being established at Kathua and Handwara in Jammu and Kashmir, while stressing the need to transform these facilities into vibrant centres of innovation, entrepreneurship and technology-driven industrial development.

The review meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Science & Technology Department; Commissioner Secretary, Planning; Director, CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine; CEO, Jammu and Kashmir Energy Development Agency; CEO, Centre for

Innovation and Transformation in Governance; faculty members from different universities and other concerned officers.

During the review, the Chief Secretary took stock of the infrastructure developed at the Industrial Biotech Park, Ghatti, Kathua, besides assessing the progress achieved on the Handwara Biotech Park project.

The Chief Secretary impressed upon the Science & Technology Department to address the governance gaps highlighted by the professionals, observing that an institutional structure in the form of a Society already exists for running these parks. He called for putting in place a professional management system for taking day-to-day operational decisions and ensuring optimum utilisation of these assets in



line with the objectives envisioned for their establishment.

He further emphasised the need for clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the Science & Technology Department and CSIR-IIIM Jammu in creating a conducive ecosystem for startups, entrepreneurship and capacity building. He urged the IIIM to position the required

professional manpower at these facilities in accordance with on-ground requirements, noting that the institution possesses the expertise and capability to provide the necessary technical and scientific support.

The Chief Secretary also called for formulation of measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with defined

timelines to achieve tangible outcomes and develop these parks into some of the best-performing innovation assets across the nation. He directed CITA to extend all possible assistance to the department in this endeavour.

Commissioner Secretary, Science & Technology Department, Babila Rakwal, apprised the meeting about the present status of infrastructure created at these parks. She informed that optimal utilisation and efficient functioning of these facilities would require professional management under the guidance of institutions like IIIM Jammu, supported through adequate funding from the department and convergence with relevant Government of India schemes.

During the meeting, Director, CSIR-IIIM, Dr Zabeer

Ahmed, and CEO, CITA, Dr Sandeep Ananthanarayanan, gave detailed presentations regarding the present status, functionality and long-term operational strategy for the biotechnology parks at Kathua and Handwara.

The meeting was informed that the Kathua facility, spread over nearly 10 acres, has been equipped with advanced infrastructure including fermentation and enzyme production units, medicinal and aromatic plant cultivation facilities, micro-propagation laboratories, farmer and youth skill development centres and central instrumentation facilities. It was further informed that the park has already hosted several programmes and activities aimed at promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and capacity building in the biotechnology sector.

The meeting was informed that the Kathua Biotech Park presently houses a BIRAC-BioNEST Incubator established to support agri-based startups and innovation-driven enterprises in sectors such as agriculture, nutraceuticals, phytopharmaceuticals, aroma and food processing, fermentation and healthcare biotechnology. The facility has been envisioned as a major innovation hub for startups, researchers and entrepreneurs from across Jammu and Kashmir.

Director, CSIR-IIIM further informed the meeting that several initiatives including farmer-centric workshops, skill development programmes, awareness campaigns under Mission YUVA and scientific conferences on AI-driven innovations in drug discovery and agriculture have already been organised at the Kathua campus.

DC Srinagar inspects civic infrastructure in Shahr-e-Khaas areas

Listens to public issues, dev demands; assures prompt, time-bound redressal

KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 20: Continuing the public outreach initiatives of the District Administration, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Wednesday conducted a Mega Public Grievance Redressal Camp at Anchar Saura in Eidgah Tehsil of the District to listen to public grievances and assess local developmental demands at the grassroots level under the weekly Block Diwas programme.

The Deputy Commissioner also visited Shahr-e-Khaas areas of the City to take first-hand appraisal of various issues regarding augmentation of civic amenities and developmental concerns of the local population.

The grievance redressal camp at Anchar Saura witnessed participation of a large number of residents from Anchar, Jenab Sahib Saura, Taploo Mohalla, Manz Mohalla, Bohlochopora and adjoining areas, who put forth various issues and developmental demands of the area, particularly with regard to augmentation of civic amenities, upgradation of infrastructure and other local concerns.

The programme was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Aadil Fareed, Joint Commissioner SMC, Nuzhat Qureshi, IAS Probationer Alfred Thomas, Chief Planning Officer Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintendent Engineer R&B Shabir Ahmad, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Tahir Sajad, District Social Welfare Officer Mohammad Yousuf, Dy CEO Anjuma Raja, Executive Engineer R&B Umar Hazari, Executive Engineer PDD Abrar Hussain, Executive Engineer Water Works Aijaz Rafiq, Tehsildar Eidgah Mohammad Iqbal and other District and Sectoral Officers.

During the interaction, various individuals projected several developmental issues and public demands before the Deputy Commissioner. The demands included augmentation of drinking water supply, construction of a Community Facilitation Centre (CFC), conservation of Anchar Lake, macadamization of internal link roads, development



of the foreshore road from Bohlochopora to Umerhair Buchpora along Anchar Lake, installation of a JK Bank ATM, upgradation of health facilities and other developmental concerns of the area.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner stated that the District Administration is organizing such grievance redressal camps to obtain first-hand appraisal of local issues and ensure their timely and effective resolution through on-ground assessment and subsequent follow-ups.

Responding to the public demands, the Deputy Commissioner assured the residents that all genuine issues projected during the programme would be addressed on priority.

Regarding augmentation of drinking water supply, the Deputy Commissioner informed that work on a 50 Gallon Over Head Tank (OHT) has already been taken up to address water scarcity in the area. He directed the concerned Engineers to expedite the process and ensure early completion of the project for the benefit of the local population.

On the issue of conservation of Anchar Lake, the DC assured that a comprehensive action plan would be formulated in consultation with all line departments to undertake effective conservation measures for the lake.

The DC also stated that a project worth Rs 1.50 crore has been approved for renovation and upgradation of the Shrine of Jenab Sahib Saura under heritage conservation programme to preserve its historical significance.

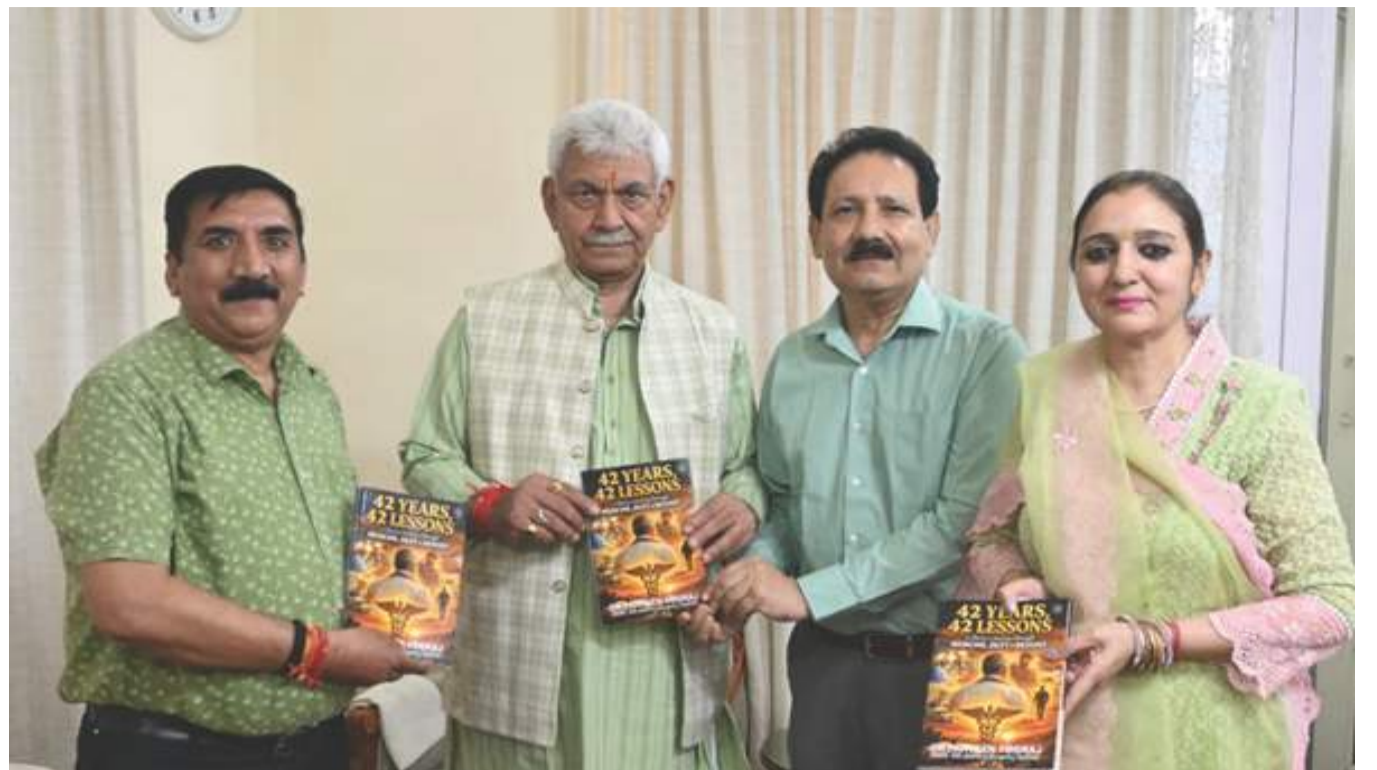
During the programme,

local residents appreciated the District Administration for conducting the outreach programme in the area and bringing governance and grievance redressal mechanisms to the doorsteps of the people.

Later, the Deputy Commissioner, accompanied by representatives of the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other trade and civil society associations, undertook an extensive visit to several areas of Shahr-e-Khaas, including Makhdoom Sahib, Bachi Darwaza and Ganj Baksh Park to take firsthand appraisal of various issues regarding civic amenities and developmental concerns of the local population.

During the visit, the DC inspected the existing drainage network, sanitation conditions, road connectivity and other public infrastructure in the area. He interacted with local residents, traders and representatives of various associations, who projected several issues requiring immediate administrative intervention.

On the occasion, the DC directed the concerned Officers to take prompt and priority measures for augmentation and upgradation of drainage systems, improvement of sanitation management, clearance of waste dumps and resolution of other civic issues to ensure better public facilities for the residents of the area. He emphasized the need for coordinated efforts among all line departments to ensure timely redressal of grievances and effective implementation of developmental works on the ground.



Book '42 Years, 42 Lessons' presented to LG Sinha

KT News Desk

Jammu, May 20: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha was on Wednesday presented with a book authored by Dr

Parveen Yograj (Retd.). The book titled "42 Years, 42 Lessons" encapsulates the author's extensive 42-year-long journey, sharing invaluable insights from his clinical

and administrative career. The LG congratulated the author on the publication of his book.

A delegation of Shaheed Bhagat Amarnath and

Jagannath Charitable Trust led by its Chairman Surinder Bhagat also called on LG Manoj Sinha and lauded the ongoing Nasha Mukta J&K Abhiyaan.

CRPF's Civic Action Program

15 women complete month-long stitching training



KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 20: A month-long stitching and tailoring programme for 15 women concluded at Marriage Hall, Abi-Guzar, near Masjid Ayesha, Lal Chowk, with certificates of completion distributed to the trainees.

The programme was organised under the Civic Action Programme 2025-26 by 132 Battalion of CRPF under the aegis of IG, CRPF, Srinagar Sector, aimed at promoting skill development

and self-reliance among women. Commandant of 132 Battalion, officers and personnel of the battalion, SP East, SDPO Kothibagh, police officials from PS Kothibagh and Maisuma, media personnel, and members of the local community attended the ceremony.

Three sewing machines were also handed over to the community hall to enable other women to utilise them for training and undertake stitching work for livelihood, officials said.

Senior Fencing Sabre World Cup

JKSC congratulates Vishal Thappar on selection

KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 20: Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council congratulated J&K's ace Sabre Fencer Vishal Thappar on his selection to represent India in the Senior Fencing Sabre World Cup scheduled to be held at Cairo, Egypt from May 22 to 24, 2026.

Vishal Thappar earned his place in the Indian team after an impressive performance during the three-phase selection trials organised by the Fencing Association of India at the National Centre of Excellence, NSNIS Patiala. His outstanding display of technique, agility, and fitness once again reaffirmed his stature as one of the country's leading sabre fencers.

Pertinently, Vishal Thappar has brought laurels to the nation and Jammu & Kashmir on several occasions and has won numerous national and international medals, including a

Senior Commonwealth Gold Medal. He is presently ranked third in India in the sabre category.

Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council, Nuzhat Gul, congratulated Vishal Thappar on this remarkable achievement and extended her best wishes to him and his family. She expressed confidence that Vishal would continue to make the Union Territory and the country proud with his performances at the international level. "The selection of Vishal Thappar for the prestigious Senior Sabre World Cup is a proud moment for Jammu & Kashmir. His dedication, consistency, and achievements continue to inspire young athletes across the region," she said.

The Indian team has been cleared by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, with full financial support from the Sports Authority of India (SAI).

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Terror needs money

always embraced the values of peaceful co-existence, mutual goodwill, and sincere friendship. Yet we face a neighbour widely known as a source of terrorism in the world. Alongside maintaining law and order, newly recruited constables must stand on the front line of national security with determination to eliminate threats of terror," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also cautioned that along with modern tools, police force should also adopt tradecraft of basic policing.

"In matters of law and order, beat policing proves highly effective. When a beat constable resolves that no crime will occur within their jurisdiction and that public land will not be occupied illegally, such unwavering commitment inevitably delivers results," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said all new recruits are heirs to this noble legacy and they will enrich it further. He said every uniform of the Jammu & Kashmir Police tells a story of courage, commitment, and purpose woven into the fabric of the nation's history.

"Each time you put on the uniform, remember that you are adding a proud chapter to its legacy. Take pride in the ideals of defence and service that the Jammu & Kashmir Police embodies, for they define both your duty and your honour," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also commended the Jammu Kashmir Police for its swift and effective action against the drug smugglers and drug peddlers during the ongoing Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir Campaign.

"J&K Police has laid out a comprehensive plan to completely choke drug entry routes. I am confident that the actions in the coming days will be stringent, and will yield major successes," he said.

Over 3200 newly recruited constables were inducted into the Jammu Kashmir Police Force today, said an official.

Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Nalin Prabhat, DGP J&K; Chandraker Bharti, Principal Secretary Home Department; SJM Gillani, Special DG Coordination PHQ; Abdul Ghani Mir, Commandant General Home Guards; Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; senior officials of police and civil administration, and family members of new recruits attended the appointment

letters presentation ceremony. (KNO)

PM Modi receives

inclusion work together, they reinforce each other, and science-driven agriculture can serve as a strong foundation for global food security," he said.

"For us, Food Security is not merely a Policy Matter; it is our responsibility towards humanity," he said.

PM Modi noted that India's scientific and innovation-based approach to farming was fostering a sustainable, climate-resilient and future-ready ecosystem.

He said that practices such as 'Per Drop More Crop' and mission-based approach to micro-irrigation and precision farming were guiding its agricultural policies.

Elaborating on tech-based farming solutions, PM Modi said that Digital Public Infrastructure, AI-based advisory systems, drones, remote-sensing technologies and sensor-based machinery were helping Indian farmers to reap rich harvests and higher farm incomes.

He said that in the last 10 years, India had developed around 3,000 climate-resilient crop varieties.

He thanked FAO for working with India to promote healthy food choices through the celebration of the International Year of Millets.

Earlier, Prime Minister Modi was received warmly by Dr Dongyu. His visit to FAO Headquarters was the first by an Indian Head of Government in the last 30 years.

During his meeting with the Director-General, PM Modi recalled the rich contributions of the FAO to India's agriculture and food security, and reaffirmed India's support to its vision and mission.

Police intensify

illegal poppy cultivation spread over agricultural land was identified and destroyed on the spot. Cases under the NDPS Act were registered and investigations were initiated."

"In Uri, Police arrested Faisal Ahmed Khan after recovering charas-like sticks wrapped in corn husk from his possession during checking at Zero Morh Daragutlian," the official said.

In a first-of-its-kind move, Anantnag Police installed a GPS-enabled tracking anklet on an accused released on bail in an NDPS case to monitor his movements and ensure compliance with court directions, the official added.

In Handwara, police destroyed illicit poppy cultivation in Mangwalpora Kralgund and registered FIR No. 31/2026 under Section 8/18 of the NDPS Act against an accused identified as Reyaz Ahmad Wani, the official said, adding that Police secured cancellation of 14 driving licences and two vehicle registration certificates of persons involved in NDPS cases as part of the crackdown on narcotics networks in Handwara.

Police also conducted anti-drug awareness programmes, public rallies, naka checking and community outreach campaigns in Handwara and Awantipora, urging people to cooperate in efforts to eradicate drug abuse and trafficking from society, the official said, adding that Police also arrested five alleged drug peddlers in Anantnag, Baramulla and Ganderbal and recovered contraband substances from their possession.

In Anantnag, police arrested a wanted heroin supplier identified as Imtiyaz Ahmad Dar alias Christian during naka checking at Chechripora bypass crossing in Dialgam. Officials said heroin-like substance was recovered from his possession, he said.

3 HELD IN GANDERBAL, HOUSE DEMOLISHED IN SRINAGAR

Meanwhile in Ganderbal, three persons travelling in a Scorpio vehicle were arrested after police recovered heroin-like substance during naka checking at Dumkadal Chowk. The accused were identified as Jahingir Ahmad Jan alias Jana, Junaid Zahoor Bhat and Jahangir Ahmad Bhat. The vehicle used in the alleged crime was also seized, an official said.

He said cases under relevant sections of law were registered at respective police stations and investigations were underway.

In another major action, Srinagar Police demolished an alleged illegal two-storey structure built on state land at Haka Bazar in Lal Bazar area, which officials said was linked to a wanted drug peddler involved in multiple NDPS cases. The property, spread over around nine marlas and estimated to be worth Rs 1.5 crore, was allegedly linked to Arshid Ahmed Sheikh. The demolition was carried out in the presence of an executive magistrate and Srinagar Municipal Corporation officials, he added.

Police in Pulwama also attached a vehicle allegedly used in narcotics trafficking in connection with an NDPS case registered at Pulwama

police station, the official said. (KNO)

Jammu sizzles

Pahalgam, one of the Valley's tourist destinations, recorded a maximum temperature of 22.4 degrees Celsius and Gulmarg settled at 21.6 degrees Celsius.

The minimum temperature in Srinagar was recorded at 17.8 degrees Celsius, over six degrees above normal, indicating warmer-than-usual nights across the Valley.

The MeT office advised people, particularly in vulnerable areas, to remain cautious during thunderstorms and avoid open spaces during lightning activity.

Authorities also warned of possible disruption in outdoor activities due to gusty winds and isolated hailstorms in some districts. (KNO)

Panchayat Electoral

gender voters. This marks a net increase of 2,26,040 voters compared to the previous revision concluded in January 2025, when the rolls listed 69,98,091 voters with January 1, 2025 as the qualifying date.

The Commission said the exercise witnessed substantial participation from the eligible citizens, with 5,10,285 forms received during the revision period. These forms were processed by Panchayat Election Booth Officials, Assistant Electoral Registration Officers, and Electoral Registration Officers in accordance with the procedure and timelines prescribed by the Commission.

To maximize outreach, the SEC undertook extensive SVEEP campaigns through print and electronic media, including radio jingles, voter appeals by the State Election Commissioner and regular newspaper advertisements. The district authorities further strengthened the awareness using hoardings, mobile awareness vans, and other SVEEP modes to ensure no eligible voter was left out.

State Election Commissioner Shantmanu commended the coordinated efforts of District Panchayat Election Officers, EROs, AEROs, PEBOs, the staff of the State Election Commission and the Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Department, as well as representatives of political parties. He also thanked the public for their active participation and cooperation in the successful completion of the revision exercise.

The SEC particularly lauded the enthusiastic

response from youth, who turned out in large numbers to enroll in the Panchayat Electoral Roll 2026 and contributed significantly to the 3.39 lakh new additions.

J&K-Ladakh

physically," it said. "No physical administrative inspection or visit of the districts shall be conducted till further orders. All administrative meetings shall be convened virtually," the circular added.

The order said the LTC facility for judicial officers and staff of the high court, except those already granted, shall remain unavailable till further orders.

"However, for any number of days during which the LTC facility remains unavailable during any month, the relevant LTC block period shall stand extended by one month," it added. The court said the Judicial Academy shall not conduct any physical training programme, and all training programmes, workshops, orientations, and related academic activities shall be conducted only through virtual mode.

"The officers of the registry shall, wherever feasible, pool the transport facilities allotted to them to minimise fuel consumption and ensure optimal utilisation of official resources," the circular said.

Army's Northern

Jammu district in the Jammu division, and in Baramulla, Bandipora and Kupwara districts of Kashmir.

The Army is deployed along the LoC, while the 240-km-long International Border is located in Samba, Kathua and Jammu districts. (KNO)

Muslims, Sikhs perform

difficult moments is our culture and tradition," he said.

The members of the Kashmiri Pandit community expressed deep gratitude towards the villagers for extending support and compassion during the difficult time.

A relative of the deceased said the support shown by Muslims and Sikhs was emotional and reassuring. "We are overwhelmed by the kindness shown by the people here. They stood by us like family members and ensured every ritual was performed properly. Such gestures keep hope and brotherhood alive," one of the family members said. (KNO)

UN cuts India's 2026 GDP forecast to 6.4 pc, still among fastest-growing economies

PTI

United Nations, May 20: The United Nations has revised downward India's economic growth forecast for 2026 to 6.4 per cent from its earlier projection of 6.6 per cent, citing global uncertainties and economic shocks arising from the ongoing West Asia crisis.

As per the report released by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) on Tuesday, India, however, remains one of the fastest-growing major economies.

West Asia crisis has delivered yet another shock to the global economy, slowing growth, reigniting inflationary pressures and heightening uncertainty, it said.

Ingo Pitterle, Senior Economist and Officer-in-charge of Global Economic Monitoring Branch, Economic Analysis and Policy Division, UN DESA, said India is "not immune" to current global challenges.

"It is a large energy importer and it is also exposed to other channels, for example, remittances, add to some vulnerability. Also, a global financial



tightening will make monetary policy more complicated," he added. Pitterle pointed out that the West Asia "shock" for all countries is having a dual impact on growth - it is lowering growth while at the same time pushing up inflation, and in doing so it is constraining the policy space. "This will also be the case for India. So, the question then remains, how will the central bank and also the fiscal authorities respond to that?..."

The report, however, noted that India remains one of the fastest-growing major economies, with output still expected

to expand by 6.4 per cent, though the step-down from 7.5 per cent in 2025 "underscores the drag from higher energy import costs and tighter financial conditions."

"We have seen structurally very robust growth in India, which has been driven by consumer demand, by public investment, but also by strong performance in services exports. These main drivers will largely remain intact, so India will clearly remain one of the fastest growing economies in the world," Pitterle said in response to a question by PTI.

The report projects that the

country could grow at 6.6 per cent in 2027.

Responding to a question on India's growth forecast, Shantanu Mukherjee, Director of Economic Analysis and Policy Division, UN DESA said that for many countries that rely on exports, it is important to keep in mind that when import costs go up, exports could also suffer.

"This is a longer term structural issue that you may begin to see play out when things like freight costs, logistics costs, industrial petrochemicals... like diesel fuel start increasing the cost for businesses," he said.

"Having said that, like many other large economies, India has some space to manage these, which is why I think we've been saying all along that a lot depends on whether you can manage these shocks within existing buffers before your inventories, fiscal space run out. That's crucial," Mukherjee said.

Global GDP growth is now forecast at 2.5 per cent in 2026—0.2 percentage points below the January projection and well below pre-pandemic norms, the report said.

Modi govt's council of ministers to meet today

Presentation of ministries on card

PTI

New Delhi, May 20: The functioning of various ministries, key decisions taken and their outcomes and future plans, among other subjects, will be discussed at a meeting of the Modi government's council of ministers on Thursday, official sources said.

To be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the meeting will be attended by all cabinet ministers, ministers of state with independent charge and other ministers of state.

This will be the first meeting of the council of ministers this year, amidst speculation of a cabinet reshuffle.

At the meeting, the functioning of various ministries and departments, key decisions taken in the recent past and their outcomes and future plans will be discussed, the sources said on Wednesday.

Different aspects of various government schemes and programmes, how to implement them for maximum success and other subjects are also expected to be reviewed.

The prime minister is likely to refer to the ongoing West Asia



crisis and its economic effects, and may give directions to the ministries and departments on how to navigate for the minimum inconvenience of the citizens.

Sectors like energy, agriculture, fertilisers, aviation, shipping and logistics may get focussed attention at the meeting, the sources said.

Soon after the West Asia conflict started, Modi had directed all concerned to take every possible step to ameliorate the problems of citizens and the sectors affected by it.

The meeting is also likely to

discuss the government's priority on bringing reforms in all sectors for the benefit of the common people. The prime minister had earlier outlined the reform priorities for the next 10 years, asserting that his government's "Reform Express" has delivered systemic transformation and benefited common citizens in a significant way. The meeting of the council of ministers comes after the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) massive success in the recently-held Assembly polls in West Bengal and Assam, besides the formation of an NDA government in Puducherry again.

Meloni thanks Modi for 'Melody' during Italy visit

PTI

Rome, May 20: Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for gifting her 'Melody' toffees, reviving the light-hearted "Melodi" wordplay associated with the two leaders on social media.

In a social media post, Meloni shared a video in which she could be heard saying, "Prime Minister Modi brought as a gift, a very, very good toffee -- Melody."

"Thank you for the gift," the video caption read.

Modi, who was also seen in the video uploaded on Wednesday, burst into laughter as Meloni jokingly referred to the "Melody" toffee while showcasing the gift.

The hashtag "Melodi", a blend of Modi and Meloni's names, was coined by the Italian prime minister during the COP28 in Dubai in 2023 and later went viral on social media following the warm interactions between the two leaders at global events.

"Good friends at COP28," Meloni had posted on social media with hashtag "Melodi", captioning a photograph with the Indian leader. Modi, who arrived in



Rome on Tuesday, is on the final leg of his five-nation tour to the UAE, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Italy from May 15-20.

He is visiting Italy at the invitation of Meloni to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in areas such as trade, defence, clean energy and technology.

The two leaders have maintained close engagement in recent years, with Meloni also visiting India for the G20 Summit in 2023.

West Asia crisis

India must be alert, no immediate worry: Civil aviation minister

PTI

Ranchi, May 20: Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu on Wednesday said the country must be prepared to tackle any possible fallout of the escalating crisis in West Asia, although the situation was "not worrisome for India at present".

During his maiden visit to Ranchi, Naidu said every sector, including civil aviation, must plan proactively to minimise the impact of the crisis on people and the country.

"The situation is not worrisome at present, but we need to remain alert. Every sector, including civil aviation, has to assess the impact and prepare short-term, medium-term and long-term strategies," he told reporters.

On concerns over rising travel costs amid global uncertainty, Naidu said the Centre had already initiated measures to shield domestic passengers



from any burden.

He said the government reduced aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices along with landing and parking charges at airports to stabilise fares and support the aviation sector. Last week,

the Delhi government reduced the value-added tax on aviation turbine fuel from 25 per cent to 7 per cent.

"Nearly five lakh passengers travel daily on domestic routes. We are continuously monitoring

airfares. If demand rises, we will increase connectivity and deploy more aircraft," Naidu said.

Unveiling a series of passenger-friendly initiatives at the Ranchi airport, he said the Civil Aviation Ministry's modified regional connectivity scheme, UDAN 2, will be launched soon with an outlay of around Rs 29,000 crore.

As part of the modified scheme, India will have 100 new airports and 200 helipads in 10 years, the Union minister said, adding that to cater to air travellers, Udan Yatri Cafes will be launched in all airports to provide affordable eatables to everyone.

He asserted the government was committed to making air travel more accessible and comfortable.

The Union Cabinet on March 25 approved the launch and implementation of the Regional Connectivity Scheme -- Modified UDAN -- for a period of 10 years with

the budgetary support of the Government of India.

The minister said the government was closely monitoring airfare prices and would increase flight connectivity and deploy more aircraft if demand rises.

About the ongoing investigation into last year's aircraft crash in Ahmedabad, Naidu said the probe was in its final stages and was being conducted in a "fair, transparent and accountable manner".

Emphasising the international nature of the investigation since passengers on that ill-fated aircraft were from multiple countries, Naidu said the final report would be released soon and would stand up to global scrutiny.

Naidu also announced that the Centre will accord top priority to providing international connectivity to Ranchi's Birsamunda Airport in addition to enhancing domestic connectivity.

India's peak power demand hits record high for 3rd straight day amid heatwave

IANs

New Delhi, May 20: India's electricity demand touched a fresh all-time high for the third consecutive day on Wednesday as scorching temperatures and heatwave conditions across several parts of the country pushed up the use of air-conditioners, coolers and other electrical appliances in homes and commercial establishments.

According to the Union Power Ministry, peak power demand during solar hours reached 265.44 GW at 3:45 pm and was fully met without any shortage in supply. The latest figure surpassed Monday's previous record of 260.45 GW recorded at 3:40 pm. Earlier, on May 18, the country had registered a peak demand of 257.37 GW. The ministry also said non-solar peak demand hit a record 247.21 GW at 10:29 pm on May 18, marking the highest-ever electricity requirement during non-solar hours. Officials said the country's electricity supply position remains stable despite the surge in consumption, with adequate generation capacity and fuel stocks available to meet summer demand. The Power Ministry stated that robust systems are in place to manage the seasonal rise in electricity consumption.

Separately, the Coal Ministry said thermal power plants currently hold 50.9 million tonnes of coal stock. In addition, around 123 million tonnes of coal are available at mines operated by Coal India Limited, while captive mines hold another 16 million tonnes.

PM Modi working to protect India's prestige on global stage: Sharad Pawar

PTI

Mumbai, May 20: NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar has said even though he may differ with Narendra Modi politically, one must not forget that as prime minister, he is working to uphold India's prestige internationally.

Speaking at an event here on Tuesday evening, the former Union minister stressed that whenever there is a chance to work collectively for the national interest, everyone should join with a shared purpose and help strengthen the country's prestige.

He also said that leaders such as former prime ministers Indira Gandhi, P V Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh always kept the country's future and reputation at the centre of their leadership.

"Political differences should not come in the way when it comes to protecting India's prestige, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is working to uphold the country's honour abroad," Pawar stated. "Prime Minister Modi



is working to protect the country's prestige outside India. We may have different political views, but when it comes to the nation's honour, political differences should not be brought in," he added.

The Rajya Sabha member was speaking at a gratitude and fellowship gathering of former state and district office-bearers organised by the Pune-based Lakshmanrao Gutte Rural Development Foundation.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut, however, disagreed with Pawar.

In response to a question on Pawar backing Modi, Raut said, "We don't agree

with his statement. The PM must reply to questions." "Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Narsimha Rao and Manmohan Singh used to talk to the press whenever they went abroad. They did not run away from giving answers," Raut said.

Pawar said many of those present at the event had devoted the most energetic years of their lives to the Youth Congress and other organisations and were now working in different political parties.

"Some may be in different parties today, but all of you continue to remain among common people and have consciously

preserved your commitment to society," he noted.

Recalling his early political journey, Pawar said he came to Pune from Baranasi in 1958 at the age of 18 because there was no college in his hometown at the time.

He said he joined the youth movement, became chief of the Pune City Youth Congress four years later, and subsequently led the Maharashtra Youth Congress before working at the national level.

The veteran leader said one of the most memorable moments of his youth was meeting Jawaharlal Nehru at Teen Murti House in Delhi. "We had prepared several questions on farmers and youth issues, but when Pandit Nehru arrived, we forgot everything we wanted to say because his personality was so towering," he recalled.

Pawar also narrated an incident involving Indira Gandhi during an official visit to the then Soviet Union, when she felt due respect had not been accorded to India's prime minister.

BJP govt in Bengal will be of nationalists: CM Suwendu



PTI

Siliguri (WB), May 20: Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Wednesday said the BJP government in West Bengal will be of the nationalists, and it will uphold Indian tradition and culture and work to change the system in the state.

Expressing the BJP's gratitude to the people of north Bengal for their continued support to the saffron party, Adhikari, in his maiden visit to the region as the chief minister, said the newly formed government will fulfill all promises made in the party's manifesto for the West Bengal assembly polls within a specific timeframe.

"This will be a government of the people, of the nationalists and will uphold Indian tradition and culture," Adhikari said. "We will have a dream government

which will fulfill the aspirations of the people. We do not want just a change of the ruling party flag's colour or the people at the helm; we want a change in the system," the chief minister said.

Speaking at the BJP office in Siliguri, the largest city in north Bengal, Adhikari said that announcements made by the party in its 'Sankalpa Patra' (poll manifesto) are already being delivered, while maintaining that there will be seamless coordination between the government and the party.

The new government has decided to introduce the Annapurna Yojana, doubling the monthly monetary assistance to women from Rs 1,500 under the Lakshmi Bhandar initiative of the previous Mamata Banerjee dispensation to Rs 3,000.

It has also made travel in government buses free for women and announced the introduction of the Ayushman Bharat Yojana in the state.

He said that in the changed situation, there will not exist 'syndicates' or 'cut money culture' or 'mafia raj' and there will not be any kind of anti-national activity in West Bengal.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah had repeatedly said that 'syndicate raj', 'cut money culture' and 'mafia raj' prevailed in West Bengal during the TMC rule, and vowed to establish the rule of law in the state.

China's Xi, Russia's Putin praise ties at Beijing talks; energy in focus

REUTERS

Beijing, May 20: China and Russia's leaders lauded on Wednesday the progress in their strategic ties, as they met in Beijing for summit talks where Moscow is expected to push for stronger energy links.

President Xi Jinping welcomed President Vladimir Putin with an honor guard and a gun salute at the Great Hall of the People, as children waved Chinese and Russian flags. Alongside formal talks, the pair are expected to cap the day with an intimate meeting over tea.

Coming on the heels of US President Donald Trump's visit to the Chinese capital, the optics and outcomes of the summit between the Chinese and Russian presidents will be closely scrutinized and compared.

Xi said the two countries should focus on long-term strategy and promote a "more just and reasonable" global governance system, according to a transcript from Chinese state news agency Xinhua.

"The reason China-Russia relations have reached this level is because we have been able to deepen political mutual trust and strategic cooperation," Xi said at the start of his meeting with Putin.

Putin said their relations were helping ensure global stability and stressed that Russia remained a reliable energy supplier amid Middle East disruption.

"Even against the backdrop of unfavorable external factors, our cooperation and economic ties continue to demonstrate good ... dynamics," said Putin, who added that he had invited Xi to visit Russia next year.

Tea diplomacy
Xi is known for hosting visiting leaders over tea, but the setting and manner of such encounters can be viewed as a signal of the Chinese leader's regard for his guest.

When Xi hosted Putin for talks in May



2024, the pair ditched their ties as they spoke over tea outdoors in Zhongnanhai, a former imperial garden that now houses the offices of the ruling Communist Party and the government. In contrast, Trump's stroll through a secret garden and tea with Xi in the same compound, as well as a tour of the Temple of Heaven last week, appeared more choreographed.

"Beijing is loving the optics of this. They're loving being the center of world attention, and they will be playing it for their domestic audience for all that it's worth," said Graeme Smith, a senior fellow at the Australian National University's Pacific Affairs department.

The rare back-to-back visits to Beijing by the leaders of two major countries deeply at odds with each other politically, militarily and economically have been hailed by Chinese state media as recognition of China's global standing in an increasingly fragmented world order.

High expectations

Putin, who has called Xi a "dear friend" and been labelled an "old friend" by the Chinese leader, arrives at a time when bilateral trade is improving after a downturn last year. Two-way trade rose 16.1 percent in the first four months of this year over the same period in 2025 in value terms.

Trade between China and Russia was worth 1.63 trillion yuan (\$240

billion) in 2025, down 6.5 percent from a record in 2024 and marking the first decline in five years. Putin has acknowledged the need to reverse the downturn, a nod to China's importance as an economic lifeline for sanctions-hit Moscow as the war in Ukraine takes a toll on its economy. He is accompanied by a delegation including deputy prime ministers, ministers and heads of state corporations and major banks.

The Kremlin has set "serious expectations" for Putin's visit, which, alongside talks, will include a signing ceremony and a banquet followed by a tea where the two leaders will discuss key international issues in an informal setting.

Some 40 documents are expected to be signed and a 47-page joint statement on their strengthening partnership will be issued, according to the Kremlin.

Negotiations on the Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline, which is due to link Russia to northern China, are also likely to be on the cards, industry experts said.

The so-called "no limits" partnership between China and Russia has strengthened since the West imposed sanctions to punish Russia for the war in Ukraine.

Energy supply shortages linked to the conflict in Iran may back Russia's case for the pipeline as a long-term gas source, but Beijing may want to stick to its supply diversification strategy.

EU agrees to implement US trade pact after Trump threats

AFP

Strasbourg (France), May 20: EU lawmakers and member states reached a deal in the early hours of Wednesday to implement the bloc's nearly year-old trade pact with the United States, with President Donald Trump threatening new tariffs unless it is done by July 4.

The 27-nation bloc struck an accord with Washington last July setting levies on most European goods at 15 percent, but to Trump's frustration it had yet to make good on its pledge to scrap levies on most US imports in return.

Negotiators from the EU's parliament and capitals wrangled late into the night, finally emerging several hours after midnight with news of an agreement to move forward. "This means we will soon deliver on our part," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said as she welcomed the agreement and called for the implementation process to be finalized quickly.

"Together, we can ensure stable, predictable, balanced, and mutually beneficial transatlantic trade," von der Leyen said in a social media post.

The EU agreement puts the bloc on track to meet Trump's deadline for ratification of the deal sealed in Turnberry, Scotland, between



Trump and von der Leyen, and hopefully turn the page on more than a year of transatlantic trade battles.

Short of that, Trump had warned the European Union should expect "much higher" tariffs — and had already vowed to raise duties on European cars and trucks from 15 to 25 percent.

The tariff blitz unleashed by Trump before the Turnberry accord, including hefty levies on steel, aluminum and car parts, jolted the bloc into cultivating trade ties around the world.

But the EU cannot afford to neglect the 1.6-trillion-euro

(\$1.9-trillion) relationship with the US, its largest trade partner.

No more 'sunrise'

The EU parliament gave the deal a conditional green light in March, after months of delay caused by Trump's designs on Greenland and a US Supreme Court ruling striking down many of the president's tariffs.

Lawmakers were under pressure to renege on several amendments that the Americans considered unacceptable — including a suspension clause that would scrap favorable tariff conditions for US exporters should the US breach the deal.

Pakistan, Iran to drive millions more Afghan returns in 2026: UN

AFP

Kabul, May 20: The United Nations said in a report on Tuesday that they are expecting almost three million Afghans to return to the country by the end of the year, more than half of whom will be women and children.

Since September 2023, 5.9 million Afghans have returned, mainly from neighboring Iran and Pakistan, accounting for around 10 to 12 percent of the population. About 600,000 Afghans returned in the first four months of 2026 from Iran and Pakistan, the UN report said, adding there were "1.7 million estimated returns from Iran and 1.1 million from Pakistan in the coming eight-month period."

Most of the Afghan returnees are skilled laborers who were born and raised in the neighboring countries or have been away from their communities for years.

"They either have weak or no ties to their communities of origin," said Tajudeen Oyewale, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan.

Oyewale added that "over half of those returning are women and children" who are the most vulnerable in the country.

The UN and NGOs are calling for \$100.7 million



The photograph taken on March 3, 2025, shows Afghan refugees walking through a refugee camp in Islamabad. (AFP/File)

for immediate border response for lifesaving assistance at key official crossing points with Iran and Pakistan.

"This figure only covers 40 percent of the most vulnerable returnees, even though 70 percent meet our vulnerability criteria," said Thamindri De Silva, Country Director of World Vision International.

Bangladesh beat Pakistan by 78 runs to complete a 2-0 Test series sweep

AP

Sylhet (Bangladesh), May 20: Taijul Islam finished with six wickets as Bangladesh dismissed Pakistan for 358 on Wednesday for a 78-run win in the second cricket Test and a 2-0 sweep of the series.

The left-arm spinner took two of the three wickets to fall on Day 5 and returned 6-120 from 34.2 overs, clinching the series after helping reduce the tourists to 316-7 on Day 4.

Pakistan added 42 runs on the fifth morning before losing three wickets without addition to the total in 13 deliveries as Bangladesh rushed to victory.

"Our bowlers did a great job in hot conditions, on a flat wicket," Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said. "In the batting sometimes (in the past) we lost too many wickets, but nowadays we have brilliant partnerships. Our tailenders also

contribute a lot. Those are the things we wanted to improve and I hope we continue."

Bangladesh won the first Test by 104 runs.

The victory marked Bangladesh's second successive series sweep against Pakistan, having previously completed a 2-0 victory in 2024.

The end of Mohammad Rizwan's defiant, 166-ball innings signalled the end of Pakistan's hopes of chasing down an improbable victory target of 437.

Rizwan (94) struck Nahid Rana (2-71) for consecutive boundaries in the third over of the day to make Pakistan's intention clear. Sajid Khan also scored freely to maintain pressure on the bowlers from the home team.

But Taijul's breakthrough, dismissing Sajid for 28, ended a 54-run partnership, marked his 18th five-wicket haul in test matches and hastened the result.

Sooryavanshi is going to be as feared as Gayle: Pathan

PTI

New Delhi, May 20: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi will instill the same fear in the bowlers' minds that West Indian marauder Chris Gayle had managed to do in his prime, according to former India pacer Irfan Pathan.

Sooryavanshi, with 53 sixes in the ongoing IPL, is within touching distance of the record 59 that Gayle struck in the 2012 season.

On Wednesday night against Lucknow Super Giants, the 15-year-old Rajasthan Royals batter hammered a 38-ball 93 that was dotted with 10 maximums and seven fours. The



brutal knock steered his team to a facile seven-wicket win despite being in pursuit of a steep 221.

"It is very difficult to stop him. In his first 10 balls,

he was batting at a strike rate of less than 100, and by the end of the innings, he had scored 93 runs off just 38 balls," Pathan said on 'JioHotstar'.

SA20 helped South Africa develop squad depth like India: Du Plessis



PTI

New Delhi, May 20: Former South Africa captain Faf du Plessis believes his country now has enough depth to field second or third-string sides like India thanks to SA20, which has helped in expanding the talent pool besides creating more opportunities for players globally.

"India can pick a second or third-string team because of their depth, and you can now say the

same about South Africa," du Plessis told SA20 on his return after a broadcasting stint in the IPL.

With 21 South African players involved in IPL this year, including 17 picked initially through retention or auction, du Plessis said the domestic T20 competition helped franchises identify talent beyond the country's established international names.

"People are finally seeing the depth of the talent pool in South Africa," he said.

Du Plessis also linked South Africa's growing standing in world cricket to recent international performances, including white-ball campaigns and the World Test Championship triumph, saying those achievements had brought the country back into the global spotlight.

South African players have increasingly found opportunities across franchise leagues in recent years, with Connor Esterhuizen earning an IPL replacement contract with Gujarat Titans, while Dian Forrester securing opportunities after performances in SA20.

Show Timings

Thursday, 21st May

BHOOTH BANGLA (U/A16+)
Hindi - 10:45 AM, 02:30 PM

Michael (U/A 13+)
English with English Subtitles
11:45 AM, 06:25 PM

Dhurandhar: The Revenge (A)
Hindi - 02:00 PM

WAR OF SHERA (U/A 16+)
PUNJABI WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES
06:00 PM

PATI PATNI AUR WOH DO (U/A16+)
Hindi Atmos -
11:15 AM, 01:45 PM, 04:15 PM, 06:45 PM

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Call: 95416 13868
For assistance with tickets