



LG unveils 'Ek Galat Kadam' poster; short film on drug abuse awareness



KT News Desk

Jammu, May 22: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday unveiled the poster of "Ek Galat Kadam", an awareness short film on drug

abuse, at Lok Bhavan. The short film features Mahira Tandon, the Youth Ambassador of Nasha Mukta J&K Abhiyaan. The Lieutenant Governor congratulated and extended his

best wishes to the entire team. Divya Tandon, Writer and Director; Sumit Tandon, Producer of the film, along with other team members, were present at the poster unveiling ceremony.



Ahead of Eid-ul-Adha, camels, often brought in from states like Rajasthan, are gaining popularity as economical choice for Qurbani. In Islamic tradition, one camel can be shared by up to 7 families. Pic: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

IFS induction stalled in J&K for 13 years

Centre examines proposal for constitution of State Forest Service

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, May 22: The induction of local officers from Jammu & Kashmir into the prestigious Indian Forest Service (IFS) has been in deep freeze over a staggering 13 years without a single promotion quota appointment.

Documents reveal that the process has remained paralysed since 2013, tangled in prolonged litigation over the constitution of a valid "State Forest Service."

"In the case of J&K, the induction process has remained stalled since 2013 due to prolonged litigation regarding the constitution of a valid "State Forest Service," reads official documents, accessed by

news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO). The recruitment into Indian Forest Service (IFS) is governed by two methods: direct recruitment through Union Public Service Commission exams and induction via promotion quota.

While 66% of posts are filled via UPSC civil services examination, the remaining 33% are reserved for promotion of eligible officers State Forest Services.

According to documents, the Union Ministry of Forest Environment and Climate Change has not determined IFS promotion quota vacancies for J&K beyond Select Year 2012, due to the legal and procedural constraints. | More on P6

If need arises, forces will strike inside Pak: Amit Shah

'India has responded firmly whenever challenged'

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, May 22: Reaffirming India's zero tolerance policy towards terrorism, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said that if the need arises armed forces will act even inside Pakistan's own territory.

Addressing the Rustamji Memorial Lecture organised in honour of Border Security Force (BSF) founding director K F Rustamji, Shah, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), referred to cross-border terrorism and infiltration and said, "India has responded firmly whenever challenged. We replied to Pakistan all three times and, if required, we will act even inside their territory."

He said India will soon



implement a complete "smart border" system along its frontiers with Pakistan and Bangladesh to strengthen surveillance and curb infiltration, drone activity and smuggling through technology-driven monitoring mechanisms.

He said the government was rapidly expanding

modern border infrastructure equipped with high-tech cameras, radars, sensors and real-time surveillance platforms.

The Union Home Minister said the Centre plans to roll out large-scale smart fencing and Integrated Border Management Systems along the two | More on P6

Dialogue Ends Deadlock Centre, Ladakh reach understanding on key issues

UT to get safeguards on lines of Art 371; to have legislative body with powers; entire bureaucracy to come under CM's control

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, May 22: The prolonged standoff between Ladakh and the Union Government over safeguards and the form of elected governance has almost come to an end, with both sides reaching an understanding on key issues on Friday.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), two groups spearheading the agitation in the Union Territory claimed that they have

reached an in-principle agreement with the Government of India on providing constitutional safeguards to Ladakh on the lines of Article 371, along with a powerful elected government headed by a Chief Minister, with the entire bureaucracy under his control.

In a joint handout, the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) said they have reached an in-principle understanding with the Government of India on restoring democracy in Ladakh and providing constitutional safeguards similar to those under Articles 371A, 371F, and 371G, which apply to Nagaland, Sikkim, and Mizoram respectively.

Articles 371A, 371F, and 371G of the Indian Constitution provide | More on P6

India, Cyprus demand action against cross-border terrorism, condemn Pahalgam attack

Both sides agree to enhance intelligence sharing, counter-radicalisation efforts globally

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, May 22: Condemning the April 22, 2025, Pahalgam terror attack that left 26 tourists dead, India and Cyprus on Friday called for stronger global action against cross-border terrorism and demanded accountability for terror networks.

The position, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) was articulated during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and visiting Cyprus President Nikos



Christodoulides, as the two countries elevated their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and agreed to deepen cooperation in counter-terrorism and security domains. Briefing the media, Secretary

(West) in the Ministry of External Affairs Sibi George said both leaders "categorically and unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism" | More on P6

CM extends greetings on Urs Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani (RA)

KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 22: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday extended warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of the annual Urs of revered saint Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani (RA), popularly known as Ameer-e-Kabeer.

In his message, the Chief Minister highlighted the immense spiritual, cultural and social contributions of Hazrat Ameer-e-Kabeer (RA), whose teachings of peace, compassion, brotherhood and righteousness continue to guide humanity and inspire generations across Jammu and Kashmir and beyond. The CM said that the



revered saint played a pivotal role in spreading the message of Islam, promoting communal harmony and enriching the region's spiritual and cultural heritage through his wisdom, scholarship and exemplary character. He urged the people to imbibe the noble values preached by the saint and work collectively towards | More on P6

Valley's high altitudes receive snowfall; hailstorm batters plains

Hot, dry weather likely after May 25



Sajid Raina

Srinagar, May 22: Fresh snowfall was recorded in the higher reaches of Kashmir, including Minimarg along the strategic Zoji La axis, while heavy rain and hailstorm lashed several plains areas on Friday, damaging orchards and standing crops in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, officials said.

The weather activity affected many parts of the Valley as an active western disturbance continued to influence Jammu and Kashmir.

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that higher reaches around Minimarg received fresh snowfall during the day, leading to a sharp dip in temperatures in the area. Rainfall was also reported from several plains districts of Kashmir, including Srinagar, Baramulla, Kupwara and parts of central Kashmir.

A severe hailstorm struck the Lasar area of Rafiabad in Baramulla district and nearby villages, causing extensive damage to | More on P6

Schizophrenia treatable but stigma delays treatment: Psychiatrist

Patients unable to recognise they are unwell; Tele-MANAS bridges mental healthcare gaps: Dr Abrar Guroo

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, May 22: Schizophrenia is a serious but treatable mental illness, yet thousands of patients continue to suffer silently due to stigma, fear and delayed medical intervention, psychiatrist Dr Abrar Guroo said on Friday.

Stressing the urgent need for awareness and compassionate care, he said misconceptions surrounding mental illness often prevent families from seeking timely psychiatric treatment, leading to worsening symptoms, disrupted



lives and avoidable long-term consequences. Speaking to the news

agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Dr Guroo said that schizophrenia, though a

serious mental illness, is treatable and manageable with timely psychiatric care, family support, and social understanding. However, he said, stigma surrounding mental illness in society continues to delay treatment and worsen outcomes for many patients.

The psychiatrist explained, "Schizophrenia affects a person's thoughts, emotions, behaviour, and perception of reality. Patients commonly experience symptoms such as hearing voices, suspiciousness, false beliefs, disturbed sleep, social withdrawal, poor

self-care, and reduced emotional expression."

"One of the major difficulties in schizophrenia is poor insight. Many patients are unable to recognise that they are unwell, which further delays treatment and medical intervention," he added.

Highlighting the social challenges associated with the illness, Dr Guroo said stigma remains one of the biggest barriers to recovery in India. According to him, many families choose to hide symptoms due to fear of judgment, social shame, and | More on P6

Boy dies after tractor overturns in Tral

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, May 22: A minor boy lost his life after a tractor overturned in Saimoh area of Tral in south Kashmir's Pulwama district on Friday.

An official told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the minor boy was sitting on a tractor parked on a

slope near a school and while attempting to start or move the vehicle, it overturned.

He said the child sustained critical injuries and died on the spot. He was later identified as Salim Ahmad Ganie (11), son of Abdul Salam Ganie, resident of Saimoh Tral. Meanwhile, police have taken cognizance of the incident. (KNO)

Deputy CM calls for time bound report on Gair Mumkin Khads

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MAY 22: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary Friday chaired a meeting of the Sub-Committee constituted to examine the issues related to Gair Mumkin Khads in Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting, as per an official statement, held at the Civil Secretariat Srinagar, was attended by Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmad Rana and Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Cooperatives and Elections, Javid Ahmad Dar, who are members of the Sub-Committee.

The Deputy Chief Minister stressed the need for seeking public suggestions before finalizing the committee's report through designated offices. He directed on designating a nodal officer from the Civil Secretariat for easy access for submission of suggestions by the general public. He directed that the report be submitted in a time-bound manner, ensuring that the genuine public concerns are addressed in a fair and legitimate way.

Additional Chief



Secretary, Jal Shakti Department, Shaleen Kabra, briefed the Sub-Committee on the present status of Gair Mumkin Khads and the ongoing process of segregation. Speaking during the meeting, the Deputy Chief Minister emphasized the need for pragmatic and people-centric decisions to ensure amicable resolution of issues faced by the public. He said that policy interventions must maintain a balance between the environmental protection and safeguarding the livelihoods and property rights of citizens.

The Committee directed for constitution of a technical team for proper

segregation of Khads and submission of accurate details. Directions were issued for identification of chronic problem areas to address recurring public issues effectively.

Speaking on the occasion, Javed Ahmad Rana stressed the importance of adopting a balanced and environmentally sustainable approach while addressing the issues related to Gair Mumkin Khads. He emphasized the need for coordinated efforts among the departments to safeguard the ecological interests while ensuring relief to the affected population.

highlighted the importance of transparency, public participation and timely redressal of grievances.

The Sub-Committee discussed in detail the existing status of Gair Mumkin Khads, Daryas and Nallahs, along with related concerns, with the objective of providing relief to the general public wherever required.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Secretary Revenue Department Rajiv Rajan, Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar, Commissioner Jammu Municipal Corporation Dr. Devansh Yadav, VC JDA, Chief Engineer I&FC Jammu, Rupesh Kumar and other senior officers of the concerned

Sakeena Ito reviews Education, Health sector scenario in Budgam Constituency



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MAY 22: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Ito, held an extensive review of the education and health sector scenario in Budgam constituency in a meeting at Civil Secretariat here on Friday.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by MLA Budgam, Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi; Special Secretaries of School Education, Higher Education and Social Welfare departments, Director School Education Kashmir, Director Health Services Kashmir, Director Colleges, Director Planning/ Director Finance of School Education, Higher Education and Social Welfare departments, Additional Secretaries of all concerned departments, CMO Srinagar, CMO Budgam, CEO Budgam and other concerned officers.

During the review meeting, the Minister took stock of the progress achieved under various schemes and assessed the status of infrastructure development works being executed across the constituency. She directed the officials to maintain close coordination and ensure that projects are completed within stipulated timelines without compromising quality standards. Regarding

Government Degree College, Soibugh, the Minister called for expediting the ongoing works so that the project is completed timely and dedicated for public use, on all ongoing developmental projects to ensure timely public benefit.

While reviewing other developmental aspects of the Budgam constituency, the Minister directed the concerned officers to prioritise all the issues raised by concerned public representative and take immediate steps for their timely redressal. She also stressed on resolving all the bottlenecks to make satellite campus of Maulana Azad National Urdu University functional at permanent campus.

While reviewing the healthcare sector, the Minister sought detailed updates regarding functioning of health institutions, availability of medical staff, medicines, diagnostic facilities and patient care services in the constituency. She instructed the concerned authorities to address gaps on priority and ensure that healthcare institutions remain fully equipped to cater to the needs of the public.

She directed the health department for rationalisation of staff in health institutions of cities and towns to fill gaps in rural and peripheral areas.

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Mohsin Ahmad Dar s/o: Mohd Ismail Dar R/o: Naseem Bagh.

Versus

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

(Registrar of Birth and Death)

...Non Applicant

NOTICE TO PUBLIC AT LARGE

Whereas, the above titled case is under process in this court, seeking direction therein to the non-applicant u/s 13(3) of the Registration of Births & Deaths Act, 1969 for registration of Birth event of the applicant's Son namely Arsalan Mohsin s/o: Mohsin Ahmad Dar as 26-10-2017 at M.C.H Sopore.

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

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Ali Mohd Sofi s/o: Ab Gaffar Sofi R/o: Ningli Sopore.

Versus

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

(Registrar of Birth and Death)

...Non Applicant

NOTICE TO PUBLIC AT LARGE

Whereas, the above titled case is under process in this court, seeking direction therein to the non-applicant u/s 13(3) of the Registration of Births & Deaths Act, 1969 for registration of Birth event of the applicant's Daughter namely Aroosh Ali D/o: Ali Mohd Sofi as 05-08-2020 at M.C.H Sopore.

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

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

CS reviews traffic decongestion plan for Jammu, Srinagar cities



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MAY 22: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo Friday chaired the 5th meeting of the Multidisciplinary Committee (MDC) on Traffic Management System to review the implementation of a comprehensive action plan aimed at easing traffic congestion and improving mobility in the twin cities of Jammu and Srinagar.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by senior administrative and police officers, including Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works Departments; Principal Secretary, Home; Commissioner Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD); Divisional Commissioner, Jammu/Kashmir; Inspector General of Police, Traffic; Secretary, Transport; Deputy Inspectors General of Traffic, Jammu/Kashmir;

Commissioner, Municipal Corporation, Jammu/Srinagar; Senior Superintendents of Police, Traffic, Srinagar/Jammu; Vice-Chairman, Srinagar Development Authority (SDA); Director, Urban Local Bodies, Kashmir/Jammu; besides officers from other concerned departments.

The Chief Secretary highlighted the significance of the recommendations put forth by the committee headed by the Principal Secretary, Home, and called for a time-bound action plan for their effective implementation.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed progress on identification and rectification of black spots, widening of major roads, creation of rotaries and junction improvements in both cities.

He stressed the need for clearly identifying funding sources for all the proposed works, noting that

these interventions are aimed at providing much-needed relief to the general public by improving ease of mobility in the twin cities and other urban centres of the UT. He directed the Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD) to take up the matter with the Finance Department to ensure smooth and timely execution of these projects across Jammu and Kashmir.

During the review, the Chief Secretary took a detailed appraisal of the measures undertaken by different departments for decongestion of major traffic corridors, augmentation of parking facilities, improvement of road infrastructure, streamlining of public transport and strengthening of intelligent traffic management systems in both the capital cities.

It was informed that several diversion routes have already been identified and operationalised in Jammu and Srinagar to reduce congestion on critical stretches and ensure smoother vehicular movement. In Jammu city, 10 diversion routes are being utilized for traffic decongestion. Similarly, five diversion routes have been made operational in Srinagar to reduce pressure on heavily congested city stretches.

Strengthen waste collection, disposal mechanisms across all areas of city: Commissioner SMC

Reviews arrangements for Eid-ul-Adha festival

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MAY 22: Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb, Friday chaired a comprehensive review meeting at the SMC Headquarters, Karan Nagar, to review and finalize arrangements being put in place for the upcoming Eid-ul-Adha festival across Srinagar city.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Joint Commissioners SMC, Secretary SMC, Chief Sanitation Officer, and other senior officials of the Corporation, who briefed the Commissioner on the preparedness of various SMC wings with regard to sanitation management, waste collection and disposal, deployment of manpower, availability of machinery, and maintenance of overall cleanliness and public hygiene during the festival period.

During the meeting, the Commissioner directed the concerned officials to ensure proper sanitation and cleanliness in and around mosques, shrines, Eidgahs, and other important religious places across the city to facilitate the smooth conduct of Eid prayers during



Eid-ul-Adha.

Emphasizing the importance of efficient waste management during the festival, the Commissioner instructed officials to further strengthen waste collection and disposal mechanisms across all areas of the city. He also directed the provision of free hooper services for the timely collection and scientific disposal of animal skins, sacrificial waste, and internal animal organs to maintain sanitation and prevent inconvenience to the public.

The Commissioner stressed that all sanitation teams and field

functionaries must remain fully operational and responsive throughout the festival days to ensure uninterrupted municipal services and prompt redressal of public grievances.

He further appealed to the citizens to extend full cooperation to the Srinagar Municipal Corporation by using designated waste collection facilities and adhering to sanitation guidelines in the larger interest of maintaining a clean, hygienic, and healthy environment during the festival.

To facilitate immediate public assistance and grievance redressal, the Srinagar Municipal Corporation has established round-the-clock Control Room services. Citizens can contact the helpline numbers (0194-2474499, 0194-2470465, 1800-180-7038) for sanitation-related assistance and support. Reiterating the commitment of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation towards ensuring efficient civic management and maintaining high standards of sanitation during Eid-ul-Adha, the Commissioner directed all concerned officers to work in close coordination for the effective implementation of the sanitation action plan across the city.

Govt. Of Jammu & Kashmir (U.T) OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION VAILLOO

FRESH NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

NIT No. 12/1516-25 of R&B/Vailloo/2026-2027/e-tendering DATED:22/05/2026

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory J&K e-tenders (In Single cover system) are invited on %age 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	Approved Amount (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/ Doc. inform of Treasury challan / Receipt (in Rs)	Earnest Money (2% of Adv. Cost) (in Rs.)	Time of completion	Project Intending Department	Class of Contractor	Major Head of account
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Minor Repair at HS Andoo	0.967	200	1934	15 Days	Education	DEE Class	PAB

Position of AA: Accorded

Position of TS: Accorded

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	22.05.2026		
2.	Period of Downloading of bidder documents.	From	22.05.2026	04.00 pm
3.	Bid submission Start Date	From	22.05.2026	04.00 pm
4.	Bid Submission End Date	To	29.05.2026	04.00 pm
5.	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	30.05.2026 at 10.00 A.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer R&B Division Vailloo		

Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender document in shape of Treasury Challan / Receipt (Under MH- 0059 PWD. NIT No. and Name of Work/Item No. to be mentioned on the Treasury Challan / Receipt (If the Nit comprises of only one item, Name of work/Item No is not mandatory) (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date) and EMD (2% of advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR pledged to Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Vailloo (Tender receiving Authority). (The Date of EMD(CDR/FDR) should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date and the validity at the time of opening of bids shall be for a period of 45 days beyond bid validity of 120 days)

- The 1st Lowest Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of allotted cost as performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR within 07 days before fixation of contract and shall be released after successful completion of defective liability period of the work.
- The EMD of 2% of successful bidders shall be released after receipt of 5% Performance Security.
- Only those contractors are eligible for taking part in the bidding process whose contractor registration card is enrolled online on the JKPWDOMS portal and the Proof of that needs to be uploaded with this bid mandatorily.
- The Advertiser's cost is inclusive of GST@18%. The bidder has to quote the rate exclusive of GST.
- Security Deposit shall be deposited by the contractor within 10 days of issuance of LOI, failing which the concerned tender
- The contractor shall initiate the work within 10 days of entering into the agreement, failing which the undersigned shall terminate the contract and issue a fresh tender after imposing penalties viz forfeit security/LD as per T&C of the Bid document and recommend contractor for blacklisting.
- The work shall be completed by the concerned contractor as per the timeline stipulated in the bid document/agreement, failing which action shall be initiated against contractor by forfeiting EMD and shall be recommended for blacklisting.
- The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Vailloo (tender receiving authority).
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids
- The earnest money shall be forfeited, if-
a. Any bidder/ tenderer withdraws his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.
b. Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.
c. Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

22.0

All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double agreement Form)

DIPK-1551/26
DATED: 22-05-2026

-Sd/-
Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division Vailloo

Pounded by Nature, Pushed to Collapse

Back to back hailstorm wipes Out Kashmir orchards

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, May 22: Widespread hailstorms accompanied by intense rainfall lashed several parts of south and north Kashmir on Friday, causing extensive damage to apple orchards, vegetables and other standing crops, and leaving growers devastated during the crucial fruit development stage.

The fresh spell of hailstorms affected several villages in Shopian, Tral, Baramulla and other areas, further worsening the crisis for orchardists already struggling with repeated weather-related losses this season.

In south Kashmir's Shopian district, villages including Pinjora, Largam, Gagren and Kanipora witnessed heavy hailstorm activity during the wee hours of Friday. Growers said the hailstorm lasted for nearly 10 to 15 minutes, damaging hundreds of apple orchards across the plains of the district.

Farmers said pea-sized hailstones struck orchards at a sensitive stage when fruit formation had just begun, causing visible injury to apple fruitlets, leaves and branches.

"We have suffered major losses once again. The hailstorm came suddenly and within minutes damaged orchards spread over several kanals," said Fayaz Ahmad, an orchardist from Largam village. "The fruit and leaves have been badly hit. This season has become extremely difficult for growers."

Preliminary estimates suggest around 15 to 20 per cent damage to the fruit in affected areas, though the actual losses are yet to be



assessed fully.

"This is the fourth hailstorm in the Shopian district this season. Repeated weather shocks are breaking the backbone of orchardists," said Mohammad Yousuf Bhat, a fruit grower. "Growers are already under financial stress, and such calamities are pushing them towards collapse."

Several orchardists claimed the actual damage in some areas could range between 25 and 30 per cent.

A heavy hailstorm was also reported from Nagbal, Zaradihar, Machama, Mandoor, Panner Jageer and adjoining areas of Tral in Pulwama district, where apple blossoms and

vegetable fields suffered extensive damage.

"We have never witnessed this kind of hailstorm. It continued for nearly half an hour and destroyed everything," said a fruit grower from Tral. "Our entire livelihood depends on horticulture. If crops keep getting damaged like this, how will growers survive?"

Another grower said repeated losses have shattered hopes of a stable harvest this year. "Our lives used to depend on orchards, but now nothing remains secure. We don't know whom to approach for help," he said.

Reports of hailstorm damage also poured in from several parts of north Kashmir, including Baramulla district, where intense

evening storms damaged orchards and standing crops on Friday.

Growers across Kashmir expressed anger over what they termed the government's failure to introduce long-pending crop protection measures despite recurring natural calamities. They said repeated appeals for implementation of a comprehensive crop insurance scheme, Market Intervention Scheme (MIS), and waiver of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans up to Rs 3 lakh have gone unheard for years.

"We have repeatedly demanded crop insurance and loan waivers, but nobody is listening to us," said an orchardist from Shopian. "Every year, hailstorms, untimely rains and market distress destroy our crops, yet growers are left to suffer alone."

Farmers said the horticulture sector remains the backbone of Kashmir's economy at a time when unemployment continues to rise. "Agriculture and horticulture are the only sectors sustaining thousands of families in Kashmir. If the government is serious about protecting livelihoods, it must safeguard this sector," another grower said.

The affected orchardists alleged that despite repeated disasters since 2014, growers have received neither adequate compensation nor any meaningful relief package. "Survey teams visit affected areas every time, estimates are prepared, but nothing concrete happens on the ground," growers said. "The government must immediately announce compensation and waive loans to help orchardists recover." Experts warned

that repeated hailstorms during flowering and early fruit formation stages can severely impact fruit recovery, quality and overall yield. Mukhtar Ahmad, an expert from the Horticulture Department, said immediate fungicide spray is necessary in hail-affected orchards to prevent fungal infections and secondary diseases.

"We have advised growers to spray recommended fungicides immediately after hailstorm damage. After three days, a 0.2 per cent urea spray can help partially damaged crops recover," he said. He further advised orchardists to maintain proper drainage, avoid immediate pruning after a hailstorm, and ensure balanced nutrition and adequate air circulation in orchards to support recovery.

"Regular monitoring of orchards becomes extremely important after such weather events," the expert added.

Notably, Kashmir has witnessed multiple hailstorms this season, causing widespread damage across orchard belts.

The first major hailstorm struck on April 6, affecting several villages in Shopian and Kulgam districts, including Feeripora, Mandujan, Pudsoo, Saidpora and DH Pora, while hilly areas of Bandipora also reported damage.

Another severe hailstorm on May 2 affected parts of Kulgam, Shopian, Kupwara and Baramulla, followed by fresh weather disturbances on May 12 and May 13 that again damaged orchards and vegetable crops in Baramulla, Kupwara and Bandipora districts—(KNO)

Elected Govt not involved in Sidhra demolitions: Dr Farooq

REHAN QAYOUM MIR

Srinagar, May 22: National Conference (NC) president Dr Farooq Abdullah on Friday said the elected government had no involvement in the demolition drive in Jammu's Sidhra area, asserting that the matter was under investigation.

Speaking to reporters here, Dr Abdullah said, "We are not involved in this. Those who have done it are being investigated."

Targeting the PDP over its criticism of the present administration, he said the party was responsible for the present situation in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35A. "They finished 370 and 35A. They are responsible for the destruction of our state," he said.

In an apparent reference to PDP leaders comparing the present system with the "Yogi model", the former Chief Minister said, "They were the ones who made it happen. Now they are making noise here. They are taking us towards destruction. They should first look at their



own families and what trouble they have brought upon the people here," Dr Farooq also hit out at the BJP over speculation surrounding the NC-Congress alliance, saying the saffron party was busy with its own campaigns. "BJP has nothing better to do. They have their own campaigns. We don't have to answer for them," he said.

He rejects reports of differences between the NC and Congress, saying attempts were being made to create confusion regarding the alliance. "Our enemies are saying

all this. The alliance is already there," he said.

Reacting to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi over foreign visits, the former Chief Minister said, "That is for Rahul Gandhi and the Prime Minister to answer."

On rising global tensions involving Iran and the United States, he expressed hope that the situation would improve soon. "I hope the war between Iran and America will end and, God willing, we will get out of this trouble," he said—(KNO)

Sakeena Itoo chairs high-level meet on strengthening drug de-addiction measures

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 22: In a decisive move to strengthen the fight against substance abuse in Jammu and Kashmir, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo on Friday called for adopting a comprehensive roadmap and awareness mechanism in all educational institutions and coaching centres across Jammu and Kashmir to identify and prevent drug abuse among youth at an early stage.

Chairing a high-level review meeting on strengthening drug de-addiction, mental health awareness and rehabilitation measures at Civil Secretariat here today, the Minister emphasized that the growing threat of drug addiction among young people demands a coordinated and society-wide response involving government departments, educational institutions, parents, civil society and healthcare professionals.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary Social Welfare, Sarmad Hafeez; Commissioner Secretary Education, Ram Niwas Sharma; Director Social Welfare Kashmir/Jammu, Director School Education Jammu/Kashmir, Director Health Services Kashmir/Jammu,



Director Colleges, Principals of all GMCs, Special Secretary Health and Medical Education, Joint Director Information (Hqrs), State Drug Controller, representatives of Civil Society Forum, Private Schools Association, Un-aided Private Schools Association and Private Coaching Centres Association, prominent citizens and other concerned stakeholders.

Addressing the participants in the meeting, the Minister directed the officers of School Education, Higher Education and Health departments to initiate structured awareness programmes in schools, colleges, universities and private coaching centres with the objective of early detection, timely counselling

and rehabilitation of vulnerable students. She stressed that preventive intervention and awareness at the grassroots level are essential to protect the younger generation from falling prey to narcotic substances.

"Educational institutions are not merely centres of learning but also platforms for shaping responsible and healthy citizens. We must ensure that our campuses remain completely free from the influence of drugs and tobacco," the Minister stated.

She directed the Commissioner Secretary Education to devise a proper roadmap for preventing and combating issues of drug menace in Educational institutions as well as coaching

centres in coordination with other stakeholders.

Highlighting the need for a robust preventive framework, Sakeena Itoo instructed officials to intensify awareness campaigns focusing on the harmful effects of drug addiction, tobacco consumption and substance abuse. She asked the concerned stakeholders to involve Ulemas, Molvis, Masjid and Mohalla Committees in the awareness regarding impact of drug abuse on youngsters as a whole.

Taking serious note of the sale of tobacco in the vicinity of schools and colleges, the Minister issued strict directions to

Continued on
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Attendant allegedly injures doctor at Pulwama Hospital

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Pulwama, May 22: A doctor posted at District Hospital Pulwama sustained head injuries after he was allegedly assaulted by an attendant inside the premises on Friday, triggering concern among the medical fraternity over the growing incidents of violence against healthcare workers.

According to the details available, the injured doctor, identified as Dr Omar Khan, was attacked while attending patients in the Outpatient Department (OPD). The incident also left a security guard injured during the altercation.

Medical Superintendent of District Hospital Pulwama, Dr Abdul Gani, said the assault took place when an attendant attempted to force the doctor to immediately examine

a patient despite the doctor having already completed his duty hours.

He said Dr. Omar Khan had continued working for nearly an additional hour beyond his scheduled shift due to heavy patient rush and had advised the attendant to consult another doctor who was available on duty at the hospital.

"Despite the doctor explaining the situation, the attendant became aggressive. He pushed the doctor and attacked him using a sitting bench. The iron portion of the bench struck the doctor on the forehead, causing a deep injury," Dr. Abdul Gani said.

Hospital officials said Dr. Omar Khan suffered a head wound and had to undergo treatment, during which doctors administered eight stitches to his forehead.

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Legislators, deputations call on Rana

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 22: Several legislators, public deputations and individuals on Friday called on Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana at Civil Secretariat here and apprised him of various public welfare issues, developmental concerns and sector-specific demands.

MLA Uri, Dr Sajjad Shafi and MLA Hazratbal, Salman Sagor discussed several constituency-related matters. They sought the Minister's intervention for augmentation of public infrastructure, improvement in water supply schemes, irrigation facilities and other developmental works in their respective areas.

During the interactions, the legislators highlighted the need for timely execution of ongoing works and early resolution of issues concerning public service delivery. They also projected several demands related to strengthening civic amenities and improving infrastructure, besides highlighting the early completion of desilting process of irrigation network.



Besides the legislators, several deputations and individuals from different areas also met the Minister and projected their grievances and demands.

A delegation of JJM contractors raised issues concerning execution of works under the Jal Jeevan Mission. It sought timely resolution of procedural and payment-related matters for smooth implementation of projects. The delegation urged the Minister for necessary intervention to ensure uninterrupted progress of works being undertaken under the mission.

Another deputation comprising seasonal labourers of the Irrigation Department projected issues and sought redressal of their long-pending concerns.

They appealed for sympathetic consideration of their demands and measures for their welfare.

Various other delegations and individuals also apprised the Minister of issues related to drinking water supply, irrigation facilities, public infrastructure and other local concerns requiring departmental attention.

The Minister reiterated the government's commitment towards ensuring responsive governance and timely redressal of public grievances.

Javed Rana said that the government is committed to strengthen public service delivery and ensuring that developmental benefits reach every

Continued on
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Traffic restrictions today in Shopian for mega Padyatra

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, May 22: Authorities have announced major traffic restrictions and diversions in Shopian town in view of a Mega Rally (Padyatra) being organised on May 23 (Saturday) as part of Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan campaign.

According to an advisory issued by the office of the Senior Superintendent of Police, Traffic Rural Kashmir, vehicular movement from Balpora Crossing up to Old Bus Stand via Jahangir Chowk Shopian will remain

completely suspended from 4:00 AM to 3:00 PM during the event. Officials said that the restrictions have been imposed to ensure smooth conduct of the rally and maintain public safety during the large gathering expected in the town. Motorists have been advised to avoid unnecessary travel within Shopian town during the scheduled hours and follow the designated diversion routes to prevent congestion and inconvenience.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

I have changed my name from (old name) NIGHAT PARVEEN to (New Name) MAHTABA. In future I will be known as MAHTABA. If anybody is having any objection he/she may Contact Passport office, Srinagar within 7 days. After Seven days no objection will be accepted.

MAHTABA
W/O ABDUL RAHIM MIR
R/O NEW COLONY NIGEN SRINAGAR

PM Modi's Netherlands Visit Advances Energy, Technology And Strategic Cooperation

Bilateral trade stands at USD 27.8 billion (2024-25). The Netherlands is India's fourth largest investor with cumulative FDI of USD 55.6 billion. Cooperation in semiconductors, critical minerals, water management, and higher education marks a transition from conventional ties to a future-oriented strategic partnership for 2026-2030.



Press Information Bureau

India and the Netherlands share a strong and expanding partnership since establishing diplomatic relations in 1947. Over the decades, cooperation has expanded across trade, investment, water, agriculture, health, and innovation. In an emerging global order, regular high-level exchanges have strengthened bilateral engagement. They have also created momentum for deeper economic and technological collaboration. Both countries now cooperate in semiconductors, renewable energy, maritime technology, defence, education, and digital innovation. The partnership also supports sustainable development, global supply chain resilience, and rules-based international cooperation. Strong people-to-people ties and growing business engagement have further deepened bilateral relations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit in May 2026 further strengthened this future-oriented partnership and India's engagement with Europe.

India-Netherlands: Driving Innovation, Trade and Sustainability

The India-Dutch partnership is built on strong historical ties and expanding strategic cooperation. It combines Dutch strengths in frontier technologies with India's scale and innovation ecosystem. Cooperation is growing in semiconductors, green hydrogen, maritime technology, and skilled mobility. The partnership is also important for global governance, economic resilience, and sustainable development. It reflects shared economic interests, technological collaboration, and common global ambitions.

Strategic and Geopolitical Context: The Netherlands today engages India not as a market alone, but as a major power. The Dutch ecosystem of frontier technology paired with India's scale of deployment defines a partnership of "innovation meets scale," visible most strikingly in semiconductors, water, hydrogen and maritime technology.

Trade, Investment and EU FTA Gateway: The Netherlands is one of India's largest trade destinations in Europe, with bilateral trade worth USD 27.8 billion (2024-25). It is the fourth largest investor in India with a cumulative FDI of USD 55.6 billion. The total merchandise trade with the Netherlands accounts for 2.46% of India's total merchandise trade. India has a trade surplus of USD 17.393 billion (INR 144,095 crores) with the Netherlands.

There are over 300 Dutch companies present in India and over 300 Indian companies present in the Netherlands. Organisations like the Netherlands India Chamber of Commerce & Trade (NICCT) and the Indian Business Chamber (IBC) promote bilateral trade and investment between the economies.

Semiconductor Collaboration: In 2024, India and the Netherlands forged a partnership to revolutionise India's semiconductor sector through skill development, training programmes, collaborative research and development and promoting start-ups and entrepreneurship in the sector.

Energy Security & Clean Energy: India and the Netherlands have been working together to scale up the joint ambition for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The two countries have been working together on connecting stakeholders; ensuring knowledge transfer; technology co-development; exchange of best practices; end-to-end infrastructure development and operational safety. The key areas of collaboration are promoting the use of green

hydrogen and developing green ports.

Mobility, Diaspora and Tourism: The Netherlands has the second largest population of people of Indian origin in Europe (next only to the UK). It is home to about 240,000 members of the Indian Diaspora, including approximately 20,000 members of the Hindustani-Surinami community wholly integrated into Dutch society. Both sides are working to streamline migration and mobility.

The India-Netherlands partnership has evolved from strong historical ties into a future-oriented strategic collaboration. Prime Minister Modi's visit marked a significant step in deepening this comprehensive partnership and strengthening India's engagement with Europe in an increasingly multipolar world.

PM Visit for Expanding Bilateral Trade and Technology Partnership

The Prime Minister of India and Their Majesties King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima of the Netherlands held discussions on strengthening India-Netherlands relations, with a focus on people-to-people ties and cooperation in education, innovation, semiconductors, digital technology, water management, and green partnerships.

They noted the significant progress achieved across these priority areas in recent years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of the Netherlands, H.E. Mr. Rob Jetten, also acknowledged the growing momentum and strategic convergence between the two countries. Recognising the expanding scope of bilateral cooperation, the two leaders decided to elevate India-Netherlands relations to a "Strategic Partnership" for the period 2026-2030. The partnership will focus on regular high-level policy dialogues and deeper cooperation across sectors of mutual interest.

Both sides agreed to strengthen economic and investment ties by:

- Promoting bilateral trade
- Improving market access
- Encouraging SME participation
- Facilitating investments
- Building resilient value chains.

Additionally, enhanced collaboration extends to:

- Water, agriculture and health
- Emerging technologies
- Innovation, science and education
- Energy transition and sustainable development
- Maritime affairs
- Defence and security cooperation
- Migration and mobility and
- Cultural and people-to-people exchanges

Prime Minister visit reaffirmed the importance of deeper international collaboration in addressing shared global challenges and advancing sustainable development. It also highlighted the growing role of strategic partnerships in strengthening innovation, economic resilience, and rules-based global cooperation.

Key Outcomes of the Bilateral Discussion

The outcomes from the Prime minister visit reflect the deepening of India-Netherlands ties and the growing potential for long-term, resilient cooperation across strategic sectors. They also highlight a shared commitment to strengthening global governance, advancing sustainable development, promoting innovation-driven growth, and enhancing cooperation on emerging global challenges through stronger bilateral and multilateral engagement.

Outcome 1: Signing of the India-Netherlands Strategic Partnership

The strategic partnership will further strengthen both country relations and support resilient economic growth aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat. It will enhance bilateral trade and investment while creating greater employment opportunities in India. The collaboration will also boost academic and research cooperation, fostering innovation and higher research output. In addition, it covers sectors of strategic importance to India's security and development goals.

Outcome 2: Restitution of Chola Copper Plates to the Government of India

The return of 11th-century Chola Copper Plates to India marked by an important cultural milestone. The plates are royal charters issued by Chola kings and contain inscriptions in Tamil and Sanskrit. They record the grant of Anaimangalam village to a Buddhist vihara in Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu. Their return will support greater research and appreciation of India's cultural and historical heritage.

Outcome 3: Strengthening Diasporic Cooperation

Strengthened mobility and diasporic cooperation will make movement between India and the Netherlands easier and more accessible. Indian students will gain improved academic, research, and internship opportunities. Skilled professionals will benefit from faster and more flexible visa access. The partnership will also create new employment opportunities for Indian youth. These measures will deepen people-to-people ties and promote stronger educational and professional collaboration.

Outcome 4: Cooperation between Tata Electronics and ASML

Cooperation in semiconductor sector will mark an important step in advancing India's ambitions. It supports the development of a semiconductor fabrication facility in Dholera, Gujarat. The partnership will strengthen India's position in the global semiconductor value chain and promote technology collaboration. It also aligns with the objectives of the India Semiconductor Mission and supports the growth of advanced manufacturing capabilities in India.

Outcome 5: Cooperation in the field of Critical Minerals

Cooperation in critical minerals will strengthen reliable supply chains for essential resources. It will support India's clean energy and advanced manufacturing ambitions. The partnership will also bring advanced technologies, investments, and skilled employment opportunities. It is expected to enhance India's mining and processing capabilities in strategic minerals.

Outcome 6: Technical Cooperation with the Netherlands in the Kalpasar Project, Gujarat

The Strategic Water Partnership will be strengthened with Dutch expertise to address water-related challenges in India. It aims to improve access to clean water for domestic and agricultural use, enhancing quality of life. The Kalpasar Project proposes a freshwater reservoir across the Gulf of Khambhat with tidal power, irrigation, and transport links.

The cooperation will also support sustainable water management and large-scale infrastructure development.

Outcome 7 Roadmap on Green Hydrogen

The India-Netherlands Roadmap on Green Hydrogen will strengthen cooperation in renewable energy and investments. It supports India's goals in production, use, and export of green hydrogen. The initiative promotes faster adoption of green hydrogen as a clean energy

source in both countries. It is expected to create new markets, attract investment, generate jobs, and support India's transition to cleaner fuels.

Outcome 8: Establishment of a Joint Working Group on Renewable Energy

The two sides have set up a Joint Working Group on Renewable Energy to enhance cooperation and share best practices. It will focus on green hydrogen, bioenergy, bio-chemicals, circular feedstocks, renewables, and battery storage. The group aims to promote industrial partnerships and knowledge exchange between the two countries. It will support India's clean energy transition while creating jobs and research opportunities.

Outcome 9: Renewal of the Joint Statement of Intent on Capacity Building for Energy Transition between NITI Aayog and the Netherlands

The projects and partnerships in sustainable energy transition will strengthen cooperation in energy security and clean energy development. They will bring together policymakers, industry leaders, and technical experts for deeper collaboration and knowledge sharing. These initiatives are expected to improve stakeholder coordination and support technology cooperation across the sector. They will also create new employment opportunities and contribute to long-term sustainable growth.

Outcome 10: Establishment of Indo-Dutch Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Flowers in West Tripura

The initiative to develop CoE will develop floriculture in Tripura and boost regional growth. It will increase farmers' income and create employment opportunities. It will improve livelihoods, especially in rural areas. Overall, it will enhance the standard of living.

Outcome 11: Establishment of Indo-Dutch Center for Excellence in Training in Dairy at the Centre of Excellence for Animal Husbandry, Bengaluru

An Indo-Dutch Centre of Excellence on Dairy Training will be set up at the Centre of Excellence for Animal Husbandry (CEAH) in Bengaluru. It will strengthen cooperation in dairy, allied agriculture, and food processing between India and the Netherlands. Training and knowledge sharing will improve productivity, quality, and skills in the sector. It will also create employment opportunities and strengthen animal husbandry.

Outcome 12: Collaboration in Animal Husbandry and Dairying

The collaboration will strengthen India-Netherlands cooperation in agriculture and animal husbandry, with a focus on market access, climate-resilient farming, and food security. It will promote knowledge sharing, technology cooperation, and sustainable agricultural practices across the sector. The partnership is expected to improve farm productivity, strengthen livestock health and disease management, and enhance supply chain efficiency. It will also support rural livelihoods, generate employment opportunities, and contribute to long-term agricultural sustainability.

Outcome 13: Arrangement for Collaboration in Health

The collaboration in health will further strengthen India-Netherlands cooperation to address global health risks through research, collaboration, and knowledge exchange. It focuses on infectious diseases, antimicrobial resistance, non-communicable diseases, digital health, and climate-health linkages. It is further supported by cooperation between

the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Outcome 14: Customs Mutual Administrative Assistance Agreement

The Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters to enhance cooperation between customs authorities. It will enable information sharing to improve enforcement and facilitate legitimate trade between India and the Netherlands. The agreement will also make trade more efficient by reducing costs and delays while improving transparency and export competitiveness.

Outcome 15: Cooperation in the field of Higher Education

The bilateral cooperation in higher education will enhance mobility of teachers and students and strengthen collaborative research. It will improve skills, employability, research output, and create new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Outcome 16: Cooperation between Nalanda University and University of Groningen, the Netherlands

The cooperation between Nalanda University and the University of Groningen will deepen academic and institutional collaboration between India and the Netherlands. It will provide students and faculty with greater global exposure through joint academic activities, exchanges, and collaborative programmes. The partnership will also create opportunities for interdisciplinary research, teaching collaboration, and knowledge sharing in emerging areas of study. In addition, it is expected to facilitate access to international funding opportunities, strengthen innovation ecosystems, and support talent development and capacity building in higher education.

Outcome 17: Collaboration between Leiden University Libraries and the Archaeological Survey of India

The collaboration between Leiden University Libraries and the Archaeological Survey of India will strengthen bilateral cooperation in historical research, archival preservation, and cultural exchange. The initiative will create new opportunities for joint research on the Chola period, promote academic collaboration, and improve access to valuable historical records and manuscripts. It will also deepen cultural diplomacy and enhance global awareness of India's rich civilisational and archaeological heritage.

Collectively, these outcomes mark a transition from conventional cooperation to a future-oriented strategic partnership. They reflect a shared vision for resilient growth, technological advancement, and stronger coordination on global challenges. The expanding India-Netherlands partnership is poised to become a key pillar of innovation-led international cooperation.

Towards a Future-Ready India-Netherlands Partnership

India and the Netherlands are steadily expanding their partnership into a comprehensive and future-oriented collaboration. Strong complementarities in technology, clean energy, semiconductors, water management, innovation, and trade provide a robust foundation for deeper engagement. The elevation of ties to a Strategic Partnership reflects growing mutual trust and shared global priorities. As both countries strengthen economic, technological, and people-to-people linkages, the partnership is poised to contribute meaningfully to sustainable growth, resilient supply chains, and international cooperation.

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

RAABITA Outreach

Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani meets delegations in Jammu

Pushes timely redress of public issues

KT News Desk

JAMMU, MAY 22: Advisor to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani, on Friday, conducted an extensive public outreach programme at the RAABITA office, Canal Road, Jammu, under the RAABITA initiative. A large number of public delegations and individuals from across the Jammu division met the Advisor and highlighted various issues, seeking speedy redress.

Interacting with the deputations, the Advisor, as per an official statement, issued on-spot directions to the concerned officers for priority resolution of public grievances raised during the programme. He also asked the heads of delegations to pursue their issues with the respective departments to ensure timely disposal.



The delegations which met the Advisor including a delegation from GCC Gurha Slathia (NGO) highlighted important issues before him which were related to area development and social welfare measures. A deputation from the citizen forum of Bathindi Welfare Board sought resolution of general developmental issues of the Bathindi area. A deputation led by Chairman Citizens Cooperative Bank Limited,

Jammu, highlighted urgent matters pertaining to the bank and sought intervention for redress. A deputation from retired Migrant Employees of Revenue Department, sought urgent intervention for treating their service period as on-duty and early approval of pending leave encashment benefits. A delegation from the Panthal area raised the issue of Kendriya Vidyalaya land at Panthal and discussed

developmental requirements of the institution for the benefit of the local community.

A deputation from JKPCS/ JKSSB aspirants presented grievances related to recruitment and examinations, including delays and uncertainty in the recruitment process affecting the candidates across J&K. Besides, some individuals from Kathua also met with the Advisor.

Nasir Aslam said RAABITA has been launched to strengthen the direct interface between the government and the citizens for prompt redress of public grievances. He took stock of the issues highlighted and directed all the concerned officers to follow up on the directions issued during the outreach programme for time-bound disposal.

Special Secretary, RAABITA, Sohail Noor Shah; Additional Secretary, RAABITA, Aziz Ahmad; Under Secretary, RAABITA, Anu Sharma and other concerned officers were present during the outreach programme.

VVP-II: Commissioner Enquiries visits Vibrant Village Rawathpora

KT News Desk

KUPWARA, MAY 22: Majid K.A. Drabu, Commissioner of Enquiries, J&K, Friday visited Vibrant Village Rawathpora, Block Reddi Chowkibal, under the Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II).

The visit was aimed at reviewing the status of infrastructure, service delivery, implementation of ongoing Central/UT Sector Schemes, and developmental indicators in Vibrant Village Rawathpora and adjoining areas.

On his arrival, the Commissioner, as per an official statement, chaired a comprehensive review meeting with officers of all concerned departments at the Guest House, Reddi Chowkibal.

During the meeting, he took stock of the progress achieved under various developmental initiatives and emphasized the need for effective implementation of welfare and infrastructure projects to ensure timely benefits to the people living in border areas.

Later, Drabu chaired a public darbar at Panchayat



Rawathpora, where local residents projected various issues and demands related to basic amenities, road connectivity, healthcare, education, power and water supply, besides other developmental concerns.

The Commissioner gave a patient hearing to the grievances and issues raised by the

public and assured them that all genuine demands would be taken up with the concerned departments for appropriate action. He reiterated the Government's commitment towards the holistic development of border villages under the Vibrant Villages Programme-II.

DC Kupwara chairs NCORD committee meeting



KT News Desk

KUPWARA, MAY 22: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Shrikant Suse Friday chaired a meeting of the District Level NCORD (Narco Coordination) Committee to review and strengthen the measures being undertaken by various departments to curb drug abuse and narcotics-related activities across the district.

During the meeting, the DC, as per an official statement, conducted a comprehensive review of the ongoing enforcement, monitoring and preventive initiatives being implemented by the concerned departments. Stressing the need for a coordinated and proactive approach, he directed all stakeholders to intensify efforts for effective control of drug abuse and dismantling of narcotics networks in the district.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized strict action against individuals found involved in drug peddling and substance abuse. He directed the concerned departments to initiate measures for cancellation of driving licences, gun licences and Aadhaar-related verifications of offenders as per the applicable provisions and procedures.

To strengthen surveillance and monitoring at the grassroots level, the Tehsildars were instructed to identify and closely monitor vulnerable areas and drug abuse hotspots within their jurisdictions. They were further directed to ensure the installation of CCTV cameras in all chemist shops to regulate the sale of medicines and prevent misuse of pharmaceutical drugs.

Highlighting the importance of community engagement and youth empowerment in combating drug addiction, the DC directed the concerned departments to expedite the development of playgrounds and libraries in all Panchayats under the NMJK Abhiyan. He stated that creating constructive recreational and educational avenues for youth is essential to steer them away from substance abuse and towards positive activities.

The meeting also witnessed a detailed discussion on several other preventive, enforcement and awareness measures aimed at eliminating the menace of drugs from the district. The DC stressed the importance of inter-departmental coordination, regular awareness campaigns and community participation to ensure a drug-free society.

DC Srinagar, SMC Commissioner visit Yatra Transit Camp Pantha Chowk

Conduct onsite review of preparedness, arrangements for smooth, seamless conduct of annual pilgrimage

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, MAY 22:- Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo and Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb Friday visited Yatra Transit Camp at Pantha Chowk to review the onsite arrangements being put in place for the smooth and seamless conduct of the upcoming Annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY)-2026.

The visit, as per an official statement, was aimed to ensure seamless arrangements and better facilities for devotees traveling to the Shri Amarnathji cave during the annual pilgrimage, halting at the Transit camp, Panthachowk.

During the visit the Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by SSP Security, Kashmir, Sajad Khaliq, Additional Deputy Commissioner Afaad Fareed, IAS Probationer, Alfred Thomas, SP Headquarter, Umar Shah, Deputy Commandant (IR), K.Sahu, Joint Commissioner SMC, Syed Abu Qasim, SDPO Panthachowk Zohaib Ahmad, Superintendent Engineer Hydraulic, Er. Anbreen Anjum, Superintendent Engineer KPDC, Syed Ahmad Wani, SDM East, Zuber Ahmad, DySP Traffic Suhail Ahmad, Tehsildar Pantha Chowk, Muzamil Zamaan and senior Officers of District Administration, Police, SMC, Information, Fire &



Emergency, Health, RTO, Traffic and other line Departments accompanied the visit.

During the visit, the DC and SMC Commissioner carried out an inspection of the Yatri Facilitation Centre and took stock of its readiness to manage and facilitate pilgrim-related services. They reviewed the facilities and infrastructure being established at the Transit Camp regarding KYC/RFID registration, accommodation, sanitation, drinking water supply, power availability, healthcare facilities, security, traffic management and other essential services.

On the occasion, the duo also inspected the readiness of Yatri Facilitation Center, which will handle critical services such as e-KYC verification, RFID card distribution and registration process to streamline the pilgrimage process, thereby ensuring streamlined movement, better crowd management and an efficient pilgrimage experience for the Yatri.

They also held detailed interactions with Officers from various line Departments and comprehensively reviewed the preparedness measures undertaken to ensure a smooth, efficient and hassle-free experience for the pilgrims. They assessed the overall coordination mechanism, operational readiness and service delivery framework being put in place for the upcoming Yatra.

Emphasizing pilgrim comfort and convenience, the Officers stressed the need for close coordination among all Departments to ensure timely completion of works and augmentation of essential services at the Transit Camp. They laid special focus on maintaining sanitation standards, ensuring availability of clean drinking water, uninterrupted power supply and other civic amenities, besides strengthening facilities at Langars (community kitchens) to provide wholesome meals to the pilgrims.

VHSND Programme organized at Poshan Narvaw Baramulla

KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, MAY 22: A Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND) programme was successfully organized Friday at Poshan Narvaw under the aegis of the Office of the District Programme Officer, Mission Poshan, Baramulla.

The programme, as per an official statement, witnessed the participation of Dr Sheebal Nayat, District Programme Officer Mission Poshan Baramulla, CDPO Naravaw, officials from the Health Department, Panchayat Secretary, Education Department, concerned Supervisor, Nutrition Mobiliser, Anganwadi Workers and Anganwadi Helpers. Approximately 150 participants attended the event.

During the programme,

general awareness was provided regarding the services and schemes of ICDS. Informative sessions were conducted on health education, sanitation, nutrition and adolescent health.

Special emphasis was laid on creating awareness among adolescent girls regarding health, hygiene and important social issues. Awareness on drug abuse was also provided during the programme, highlighting its harmful effects on health, family and society.

Participants were encouraged to stay away from drugs and promote a healthy and positive lifestyle within the community. The programme concluded with active community participation and appreciation from the attendees for the informative and awareness-based activities conducted during the event.

World Biodiversity Conservation Day: JKLCMA organises awareness programme

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, MAY 22: On the occasion of World Biodiversity Conservation Day, Jammu and Kashmir Lake Conservation and Management Authority (JKLCMA) organized an awareness programme at Hadura village to promote the conservation of biodiversity and encourage sustainable farming practices.

Speaking on the occasion, the Vice Chairman, JKLCMA, Khurshid Ahmad Shah, as per an official statement, emphasized the urgent need to protect the planet's rich biodiversity and adopt eco-friendly agricultural practices for the wellbeing of future generations. He urged

farmers to move towards organic farming methods to maintain ecological balance and ensure healthy agricultural production.

During the programme, farmers were made aware of the harmful effects of the excessive use of chemical fertilizers, fungicides, and pesticides on soil health, water resources, and the environment. The importance of sustainable and environmentally responsible farming practices was highlighted in detail.

In collaboration with NAFED, JKLCMA also distributed 250 kgs of organic fertilizer among local farmers to encourage the use of organic alternatives and reduce dependence on synthetic fertilizers.

Debates, PTMs, sports activities held across Bandipora

KT News Desk

BANDIPORA, MAY 22: Awareness and outreach activities under the ongoing Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA) continued across district Bandipora on Friday with debate competitions, discussion sessions, parent-teacher meetings, sports activities and awareness programmes organised at various educational institutions.

Educational institutions including HSS Budoab, HS Panar, Govt HSS PTL Gurez, GHS Naidkhai, GHS Nadihal, HS Koragbal, H/S Ketson, HS Malangam Tulail, Govt Boys High School Garoora, HSS Nowgam, PM SHRI HSS Shadipora, HSS Quilmuqam, PM SHRI GHS Odina and HS Wanpora conducted different activities under the NMBA action plan focusing on peer pressure awareness, positive decision-making, youth engagement and prevention of substance abuse.

At Govt HSS PTL Gurez, a debate and discussion programme on the theme "Peer Pressure" was organised under Day-33 of the Nasha Mukta



Bharat Abhiyan by Shahjahan Sheikh.

Similar debate sessions on 'peer pressure' were conducted at GHS Naidkhai, HSS Nowgam, PM SHRI HSS Shadipora, HSS Quilmuqam and Govt Boys High School Garoora, where students actively participated and expressed their views on the positive and negative impacts of peer pressure.

At GHS Naidkhai, Teachers highlighted how positive peer pressure could motivate students towards discipline, education and good habits, while negative peer pressure could lead youth towards addiction and harmful activities. Students were encouraged to make wise decisions, choose good company and remain committed towards a healthy and drug-free life.

PM SHRI HSS Shadipora organised interactive sessions, role plays and critical thinking exercises aimed at equipping students with tools to handle peer pressure and avoid substance abuse. The programme concluded with students taking a pledge for a clean, healthy and drug-free lifestyle.

Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs) were also organised at HS Koragbal, HS Malangam Tulail and PM SHRI GHS Odina. During the meetings, teachers and parents discussed the academic performance, discipline, mental well-being, moral values and overall personality development of students. At PM SHRI GHS Odina, parents were also guided regarding registration on the JK Parent Plus platform for better communication and student monitoring.

Mission Yuva

Orientation programme for SBDU Members, BHD staff, Motivators held in Budgam

KT News Desk

Budgam, May 22: An orientation programme for newly hired Small Business Development Unit (SBDU) members, Block Handholding Desk (BHD) staff, and Motivators under Mission YUVA was organised Friday by the District Employment and Counselling Centre (DE&CC), Budgam at the Conference Hall, Budgam.

The programme, as per an official statement, was chaired by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Budgam, Vivek Agarwal, who interacted extensively with the participants and highlighted the importance of their role in the effective implementation of Mission YUVA at the grassroots level.

Addressing the gathering, the ADCDC emphasised that Motivators and field functionaries are the backbone of Mission YUVA and play a pivotal role in identifying,

guiding, and supporting unemployed youth towards sustainable livelihood and self-employment opportunities.

He urged the newly engaged staff to work with dedication, sincerity, and commitment to ensure that the objectives of the Mission are achieved in letter and spirit.

During the session, detailed presentations were delivered by the Career Counselling Officer and Employment Officer, DE&CC Budgam, focusing on the operational guidelines of Mission YUVA, implementation mechanisms, field-level coordination, beneficiary identification, counselling procedures, and monitoring frameworks.

The officials also provided a comprehensive demonstration of the Mission YUVA portal, explaining various features related to registration, data management, beneficiary tracking, reporting mechanisms, and online service delivery. Participants were sensitised about the importance

Lt Gen Rajiv Ghai, other delegations call on LG Sinha



KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 22: Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai, Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy) called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday. He was accompanied by Lieutenant General Balbir Singh, General Officer Commanding (GoC), Chinara Corps.

The Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry, headed by Tiruchi Siva, also called on the Lieutenant Governor at Lok Bhavan.

Subsequently, a delegation of Dharm Jagran Sansthan Dharmarth Trust Bharat led by Acharya Mahant Dr. Vivek Guru Ji called on LG Manoj Sinha. The delegation apprised the Lieutenant Governor on important issues related to conduct of Jammu & Kashmir Dashar Kumbh 2026 (Bod Dashar),

scheduled to be held from 15th to 24th July 2026 at the sacred confluence of the Sindh and Jhelum Rivers at Shadipora, Ganderbal.

Jammu & Kashmir Dashar Kumbh 2026 is being jointly organized by J&K Dashar Kumbh Parichalan Samiti, Pt. Premnath Shastri Sanskritik Shodh Sansthan, Shadipora Kumbh Committee and Dharm Jagran Sansthan Dharmarth Trust - Bharat.

The ten-day spiritual and cultural congregation marks the revival of an ancient civilization and spiritual tradition of Jammu Kashmir and is expected to attract a significant gathering of devotees, saints, scholars, spiritual leaders, and participants from across India and abroad. Members of organising committees were also present during the interaction.

Int'l Day for Biological Diversity

'Humans have core responsibility to conserve biodiversity'

KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 22: The Jammu & Kashmir Biodiversity Council celebrated International Day for Biological Diversity on Friday at Dachigam, highlighting the Union Territory's rich ecological heritage and reinforcing the global call to "Act Locally, Impact Globally."

The event was attended by Chief Guest Sheetal Nanda, Commissioner Secretary Forests, Ecology and Environment; Sarvesh Rai, PCCF/HoFF J&K and Chairman J&K Biodiversity Council; Chaturbhuj Bahera PCCF/CWW/ Director SFRI and Member Secretary J&K Biodiversity Council; Irfan Rasool Wani, CCF Kashmir; Tawheed Ahmad Deva, Regional Wildlife Warden Kashmir; Saurabh Sharma CF Srinagar; Irfan Ali Shah, CF North and Professor Anzar Khuroo Member Biodiversity Council from Kashmir University, alongside Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs), Range Officers (ROs) and members of various Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) from across J&K.

In her address, Sheetal Nanda told the audience that the International Day for Biological Diversity serves as a vital reminder of humanity's deep dependence on the natural world. "Humans have a core responsibility to conserve biodiversity



because our very survival depends on it," she stated.

The Commissioner Secretary emphasized the critical need to balance infrastructure development with environmental preservation, noting that economic growth must not come at the cost of nature. On this occasion, she directed the Council to prepare a comprehensive catalog of the region's

flora, fauna and avian species and advocated creation of ex-situ (off-site) conservation areas to protect the vulnerable species.

Sarvesh Rai outlined J&K's unique ecological footprint, noting that 48% of the region's geographic area is under forest cover, with 25% of that dedicated to Wildlife Protected Areas. He highlighted the vital

ecosystem services that forests provide, such as water purification and pollination and pointed out the economic significance of the region's Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs).

"Our local BMCs have successfully collected 25 crore over the last three years," Rai revealed while advocating the sustainable harvesting of medicinal plants to safeguard

them for future generations. He also shared positive conservation news, noting that populations of iconic species like the Hangul, Brown Bear, Black Bear and Tiger are steadily bouncing back.

Earlier, Chatturbhuj Bahera highlighted that biodiversity extends far beyond dense forests to include agricultural and cultural diversity, which must be protected to ensure future food security. He spoke on the root causes of human-animal conflict and emphasized the crucial role played by the 2,490 active BMCs across Jammu and Kashmir in documenting the local resources.

Providing a broader scientific context, Professor Anzar Khuroo noted that India is one of only 20 megadiverse countries globally, harboring 4 of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots. He detailed the immense richness of the Himalayan ecosystem, which boasts 12,000 flowering plant species, 5,000 of which are found in Kashmir alone. He stressed the need for "course correction" in development practices to achieve true sustainability.

The program concluded with a collective pledge to conserve biodiversity, with the official oath read out by prominent environmentalist Nazir Benazir. Biodiversity atlas of Kashmir was also unveiled on the occasion.

DC Sgr holds consultation with Shia associations on Muharram

Calls for peaceful, seamless conduct of processions

KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 22: In connection with upcoming holy month of Muharram-ul-Haram, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo Friday held a consultative meeting with representatives of prominent Shia Associations here at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex in order to seek suggestions from stakeholders for ensuring better facilities for the

mourners and smooth conduct of religious processions.

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner, Rifat Aftab Qureshi, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Aadil Fareed, RTO, Kashmir, Qazi Irfan, SP Headquarter, Umar Shah, Joint Commissioner SMC, Nuzhat Khurshid, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Assistant Commissioner Development, Tariq Ahmad, SDM West, Irfan Bahadur, S.E KPDC, Syed Ahmad Wani, S.E Hydraulic, Er. Anbreem Anjum SDM East Zubair Ahmad, Assistant



Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar, all Tehsildars, Block Development Officers, Executive Engineers of R&B, PHE, PDD, SMC and Officers from Food

Safety, Health, FCS&CA, Fire & Emergency Services and other Departments were present on the occasion. Representatives of prominent

Shia Associations, including All J&K Shia Association, Anjuman-e-Sharie Shiyani, Darul Mustafa, Yaadgar-i-Hussaini Committee and others also participated in the meeting.

During the interaction, the Deputy Commissioner sought suggestions from the representatives of Shia Associations to ensure the smooth, peaceful and well-coordinated conduct of Muharram processions during the upcoming holy month. The participants highlighted various issues, concerns and demands pertaining to arrangements and civic amenities, which were heard in detail by the Deputy Commissioner. He assured them

that all genuine grievances and demands would be addressed in a time-bound and prioritized manner.

While appreciating the cooperation, discipline and coordination extended by the mourners during the last years, the DC also sought continued support from all stakeholders, religious bodies, and community representatives to ensure the peaceful, orderly and dignified conduct of Muharram processions and allied religious gatherings this year.

The Deputy Commissioner stated that the objective of the meeting was to ensure that all basic arrangements are

put in place well in advance by the District Administration to facilitate mourners during Muharram.

The DC added that arrangements pertaining to electricity and water supply, repair and maintenance of internal roads, cleanliness and sanitation measures, repair of street lighting, provision of additional ration, transport and parking facilities and first aid medical services are being prioritised. He further informed that necessary instructions have already been issued to all concerned departments for their timely execution and effective on-ground implementation.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

IFS induction stalled

In a ray of hope that the issue could be sorted out, the Division Bench of High Court settled the matter vide judgment dated 21.11.2024.

After the judgement, the proposal for constitution of State Forest Service with the approval of the Competent Authority was forwarded to the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India for approval December 11, 2025.

"Upon approval and notification of the State Forest Service, the process for determination and filling up of promotion quota vacancies in IFS will be initiated," the documents state.

The Union Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change examined the matter and found that only J&K Forest (Gazetted) Service (Territorial) is satisfying the recruitment, training and other criteria envisaged in the Ministry notification No.3-17/99-RT(1) dated 21. 06. 2004.

"Therefore, the state Government is requested to submit the proposal for consideration of J&K Forest(Gazetted) Service(Territorial) under Rule 2(g) of IFS (Recruitment) Rules, 1996," reads the letter written to J&K Chief Secretary to MoEF &CC.

Rule 2(g) of the Indian Forest Service (Recruitment) Rules, 1996 defines what constitutes a "State Forest Service" for the purpose of induction into the IFS under the 33% promotion quota. (KNO)

If need arises,

international borders within this year. "The entire border management system is being upgraded with the help of technology. Advanced surveillance tools and real-time monitoring systems will strengthen the country's border security," Shah said.

The Union Home Minister said the new system will help security agencies detect infiltration attempts, drone movement, cattle smuggling, narcotics trafficking and other suspicious activities instantly. He said land allocation for the smart fencing projects was progressing quickly and added that the West Bengal government had provided the required land for the initiative.

Shah said security personnel would receive real-time alerts under the proposed mechanism, allowing faster response and improved coordination on border-related threats.

Speaking on Left Wing Extremism, Shah said India was moving rapidly towards becoming free from Naxal violence, asserting that the government's strategy had produced decisive results on the ground.

"A problem that persisted for decades is nearing its end. Merely controlling a problem is not enough; eliminating it from the root is the real solution," he said.

The Home Minister also said the BSF would be assigned greater responsibilities in the coming years, particularly in coordination with local administrations to check illegal cross-border activities.

He said coordination mechanisms would be strengthened from patwari-level offices to district administrations, especially along the India-Bangladesh border.

According to Shah, the BSF's role would not remain limited to stopping or pushing back infiltrators, but would also focus on preventing illegal entry attempts through stronger intelligence and administrative coordination.

He added that the Centre and border states were working together to strengthen border security infrastructure and ensure smooth implementation of fencing and surveillance projects. (KNO)

Centre, Ladakh

special protections to these states: Article 371A safeguards Nagaland's customs and land rights, Article 371F secures Sikkim's laws and representation, and Article 371G protects Mizoram's traditions and land ownership.

According to the handout, legislative, executive, and financial powers will rest with elected representatives through a Union Territory-level legislative body. "All bureaucrats of the UT, including the Chief Secretary, will come under the executive head of the UT-level elected body proposed to be the Chief Minister," the handout stated.

The KDA and LAB stated that they look forward to closely working out the finer operational details with the MHA in consultation with legal and constitutional experts.

Both LAB and KDA said MHA authorities explained that the only reason Ladakh cannot be granted statehood at present is its lack of adequate revenue generation to meet revenue expenditures such as employee salaries. "However, this setup will lead Ladakh towards

full statehood once it meets the revenue criteria," the handout further stated.

The handout was issued after a meeting of sub-committee comprising representatives of MHA, LAB and KDA.

During the meeting, both LAB and KDA, as per statement, reiterated the long-standing aspirations of the people of Ladakh regarding the restoration of democracy, constitutional safeguards, and the demand for Statehood and Sixth Schedule protections. (KNO)

Valley's high altitudes

apple orchards, vegetable fields and standing crops, locals said.

The hailstorm, accompanied by heavy rain and gusty winds, also affected villages in the Zaingeer belt, where residents reported damage to agricultural land during the afternoon hours.

"The weather changed suddenly as dark clouds gathered over the area, followed by intense rainfall and hailstones. Apple orchards and crops have suffered damage," a resident from Rafiabab said.

Farmers expressed concern over losses to orchards and crops, saying the untimely hailstorm could impact the ongoing agricultural season in the area.

Officials said preliminary reports of damage had been received from affected villages, and assessment teams would evaluate the extent of losses.

The latest weather activity disrupted normal life in some areas, with waterlogging reported from low-lying localities and movement slowing on several roads during heavy showers.

The Meteorological Department said weather conditions are expected to remain unstable over the next few days.

According to the forecast, generally dry weather is expected during the forenoon between May 23 and 25, with brief showers likely at scattered places towards late afternoon hours.

From May 26 to 28, the weather is expected to remain mainly hot and dry across Jammu and Kashmir, while brief showers are likely at a few places between May 29 and 31.

Weather officials have advised people, particularly those in vulnerable and mountainous areas, to remain cautious during periods of thunderstorms, gusty winds and hailstorm activity. (KNO)

India, Cyprus demand

and reaffirmed commitment to joint efforts against radicalisation and terror financing.

He said Cyprus extended "solidarity and unwavering support" to India in its fight against terrorism, particularly in the context of recent incidents, including the Pahalgam attack and the blast near the Red Fort.

The two sides also stressed the need for perpetrators of such attacks to be brought to justice without delay, and underlined that fragmented global responses were insufficient to address evolving terror threats.

The Ministry of External Affairs said that both leaders called for strengthening international mechanisms to counter terrorism in a "comprehensive and sustained manner" and pushed for early finalisation of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism within the United Nations framework.

India and Cyprus also agreed that state-backed and cross-border terror networks required coordinated global pressure, including disruption of financing channels and logistical support systems.

As part of institutional cooperation, the two countries agreed to set up a Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism to enhance coordination on intelligence sharing, counter-radicalisation efforts and security capacity building.

Prime Minister Modi, during the discussions, also outlined broader security cooperation including cyber security, maritime domain awareness and emerging technology-based defence systems.

The talks formed part of a wider strategic shift in bilateral relations, with both sides agreeing to expand engagement across defence, infrastructure and digital sectors. Cyprus also reiterated its support for India's position on global governance reforms, including its bid for a permanent seat in a reformed United Nations Security Council.

President Christodoulides, on his part, said global governance structures must reflect current geopolitical realities and stressed deeper cooperation with India in addressing shared security challenges.

The visit also included discussions on investment, migration mobility frameworks and trade cooperation, with both sides noting steady growth in economic ties.

However, officials said counter-terrorism remained a central pillar of the renewed partnership, with both New Delhi and Nicosia describing terrorism as a shared global threat requiring urgent and coordinated international action. (KNO)

CM extends greetings

strengthening mutual respect, unity and harmony in society.

The Chief Minister prayed for peace, prosperity and well-being of the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the blessed occasion.

Schizophrenia treatable

discrimination.

"Instead of seeking psychiatric care early, many patients are taken to faith healers or kept isolated at home. By the time professional medical help is sought, valuable years may already have been lost," he said.

He warned that delayed treatment can have long-term consequences, including interrupted education, unemployment, strained family relationships, worsening psychiatric symptoms, and emotional stress within families.

"Research across the world consistently shows that early treatment leads to better recovery, improved functioning, and a better quality of life for patients," Dr Guroo added.

The psychiatrist stressed that schizophrenia continues to be widely misunderstood in society, with many patients being unfairly labelled as dangerous or incapable of living independently.

"In reality, many people living with schizophrenia can study, work, maintain relationships, and lead independent lives when they receive proper treatment, medication, rehabilitation, and strong family support," he said.

The initiatives, such as Tele-MANAS, help bridge gaps in mental healthcare access by providing confidential counselling and psychiatric support services to people in need, he said.

Calling for greater awareness and compassion, Dr Guroo said mental illness should never be hidden in silence. "Schizophrenia is not a character flaw, personal weakness, or social disgrace. It is a medical condition that deserves timely care, understanding, dignity, and compassion," he said. (KNO)

'Had a fruitful meeting with council of ministers,' says PM Modi

PTI

New Delhi, May 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said he had a fruitful meeting with his council of ministers where they exchanged perspectives and best practices to boost 'Ease of Living' and 'Ease of Doing Business'.

Modi said the meeting on Thursday evening also discussed how to further reforms to realise the shared dream of a developed India.

"Had a fruitful meeting of the Council of Ministers yesterday. We exchanged perspectives and best practices relating to boosting 'Ease of Living', 'Ease of Doing Business' and how to further reforms in order to realise our shared dream of a Viksit Bharat," Modi said in a post on X.

The meeting, which lasted for over four hours, was attended by all cabinet ministers, ministers of state (independent charge), and ministers of state.

This was the first meeting of the council this year.

The prime minister had earlier asserted that his government's "Reform Express" has delivered systemic transformation and benefited the citizens in a significant way.

Sources said the prime minister told his council of ministers to set 2047 as the target year to make India a fully developed nation.

He told the ministers that their aim and objective should always be to bring comfort to people's lives and "ease of living". Modi said that



there should not be any interference in the people's lives in any way, the sources said.

The prime minister told the ministers to take all possible steps so that people get maximum benefits from the government welfare programmes, they said.

He said this is the time to look forward, not dwell on what was done in the past. Modi noted that while the government has been in power since 2014, the focus in 2026 must be on future goals and achievements.

He advised ministers to remain focused on governance and delivery, the sources said.

The prime minister stressed that there should be no pendency in government work. External Affairs

Minister S Jaishankar gave a presentation on the latest visit of Modi to the UAE, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Italy.

A total of nine secretaries gave presentations on the initiatives and performance of their ministries and departments.

Cabinet Secretary T V Somanathan gave a presentation on overall government reform initiatives and other people-centric measures. Niti Aayog member Rajiv Gauba also gave a presentation.

The council of ministers meeting comes after the BJP's massive success in the recently held assembly elections in West Bengal and Assam, returning to power in Puducherry again.

BJP's Bengal win can reshape India's economic direction: Pollster Gupta



PTI

New Delhi, May 22: Pollster Pradeep Gupta has argued that the BJP's victory in the West Bengal Assembly election has the potential to reshape not just the state's future but also the economic direction of the entire country, citing eastern India's vast natural re-

sources, ports and untapped trade potential.

The founder-chairman of Axis My India said states, such as Bihar, Odisha, Assam and West Bengal, collectively possess enormous economic and strategic importance.

"It is not just about Bengal. A victory there can change the direction and

condition of the entire country," Gupta told PTI in an interview on Wednesday, while discussing the broader implications of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) poll triumph in West Bengal, dislodging the Trinamool Congress (TMC) from power after 15 years.

According to Gupta, eastern India's importance stems from its natural resources, maritime access and connectivity to the northeast and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Referring to West Bengal's geographical position, he said access to the Andaman Islands effectively passes through the state, underlining its strategic significance.

He noted that Bengali and Tamil-speaking communities form a substantial part of the population in the islands because eastern India historically served as an important resource and migration base.

Gupta pointed out that regions with a strong port infrastructure and trade networks historically became centres of prosperity.

NCERT book row: SC modifies earlier order concerning 3 academics

PTI

New Delhi, May 22: The Supreme Court on Friday modified its March 11 order that had directed the Centre, states and others to disassociate from three academics, following a row over an NCERT book chapter containing "offending" contents on corruption in the judiciary.

The apex court left it open to the Centre, states, Union territories, public universities and institutions that receive funds from the central or state governments to take an independent decision on the issue, without being influenced by its observations made in the March 11 order.

A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joydip Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi also recalled that the three academics -- Professor Michel Danino, Suparna Diwakar and Alok Prasanna Kumar -- had "deliberately and knowingly misrepresented the facts" in order to project a negative image of the Indian judiciary to the students of Class 8.

RBI announces record Rs 2.87 lakh cr dividend to govt amid West Asia conflict



PTI

Mumbai, May 22: The Reserve Bank of India announced a record dividend of Rs 2.87 lakh crore to the government for the year-ended March 2025, providing a financial boost for the exchequer amid rising import bills and supply chain disruptions due to the West Asia conflict.

The dividend is 6.7 per cent higher than Rs 2.69 lakh crore for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

In a statement, the RBI said its net income, before risk provision and transfer to statutory funds, aggregated Rs 3.96 lakh crore in FY26 as against Rs 3.13 lakh crore in FY25.

"The balance sheet of the Bank expanded by 20.61 per cent to Rs 91,97,121.08 crore as on March 31, 2026," the

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said.

The RBI's Central Board of Directors, at its meeting, reviewed the global and domestic economic scenario, including risks to the outlook, and also approved the dividend.

According to the statement, the revised Economic Capital Framework (ECF) provides flexibility to maintain the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB) between the range of 4.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent of the size of the balance sheet.

"Taking into consideration the current macroeconomic factors, financial performance of the Bank and maintenance of appropriate risk buffers, the Central Board decided to transfer Rs 1,09,379.64 crore towards the CRB for FY 2025-26 as against Rs 44,861.70 crore in the previous year," it said. The

CRB at 6.5 per cent of the size of the RBI balance sheet, compared to 7.5 per cent for 2024-25.

"The Central Board approved the transfer of surplus of Rs 2,86,588.46 crore to the Central Government for the accounting year 2025-26," the RBI said.

The 623rd meeting of the central board was held under the Chairmanship of Governor Sanjay Malhotra. Deputy governors Swaminathan J, Poonam Gupta, Shirish Chandra Murmu, and Rohit Jain attended the meeting.

Other directors of the Central Board, including Nagaraju Maddirala, Secretary, Department of Financial Services; Satish Kashinath Marathe, Revathy Iyer, Sachin Chaturvedi, Anand Gopal Mahindra, Venu Srinivasan and Pankaj Ramanbhai Patel, too attended the meeting.

Amid the West Asia crisis, energy prices as well as those of fertilisers and other commodities have shot up, posing financial challenges. The rupee has also depreciated steeply, a scenario that makes imports costlier.

India meets about 88 per cent of its crude oil requirements through imports.

NDA may lose seat in RS as EC announces polls for 26 seats on June 18

PTI

New Delhi, May 22: The NDA is likely to lose one Rajya Sabha seat in the biennial elections for 26 seats in 12 states across the country, while the Congress-led opposition is set to gain three.

The Election Commission on Friday announced elections for 26 Rajya Sabha seats on June 18 following the retirement of incumbents, including former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party leader Digvijaya Singh, besides two Union ministers Ravneet Singh and George Kurian. In a statement,

the EC said the elections for the Rajya Sabha seats will be held in 10 states where 24 incumbents are retiring on different dates beginning June 21 to July 19. Of the total 26 seats where elections are being held, the NDA currently has 18 and the Congress four while one seat is with the JMM and three are with the YSRCP.

The NDA is likely to get 17 seats in these elections, while the Congress will get five, the JMM two and the TVK one. The NDA currently has 149 MPs in the upper house while the opposition has 78 and non-aligned regional parties have 17 MPs in the 244-member house.

CBSE pushes deadline to obtain scanned copies of Class-12 answer sheets to May 24

PTI

New Delhi, May 22: The CBSE has extended the last date for obtaining scanned copies of the Class-12 board exam answer books till May 24, citing unprecedented traffic on its website and attempts of unauthorised interference. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had earlier extended the deadline from May 22 to May 23 amid complaints from students over difficulties in accessing scanned copies of the answer books through the portal.

"The CBSE website has been facing unprecedented traffic since the past few days and has also faced several attempts of unauthorised interference, which has made it prone to disruptions," the board said in a circular issued on Friday.

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL GANDERBAL

Fax /Ph: 0194-2416090

e-mail: ceo-mcganderbal-jk@nic.in

Subject: Outsource of (26 No. of Sanitation Labours and 1 No. of Driver) for a period of 1 Year at Municipal Council Ganderbal through Jktenders Portal.

AUCTION NOTICE

For and on behalf of Government of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory, e-tenders (in single cover system)

are invited from the interested persons /parties /firms/ Companies outsourcing of Sanitation Labours at Municipal Council Ganderbal.

S No	Particulars
1	Outsource of (26 No. of Sanitation Labours and 01. No. of Driver for a period of 1 Year at Municipal Council Ganderbal.

Terms and conditions:

- The aspiring/ interested bidder must be bonafide person/party with sound financial back ground holding PAN and TAN and should submit bids in two covers. The first cover should contain the following documents as qualifying criteria.
 - Copy of PAN card, Aadhaar Card and Domicile Certificate,
 - Copy of Turn over certificate of Chattered Accountant of Rs:-1.00 Crore annually of Last 3 Years
 - Experience certificate at least 5 Years in relevant field (outsourcing), GST Registration certificate, EPF Registration and ESI Registration of agency, I.S.O registration certificate, ISO 9001:2015 ISO 41001:2018, ISO 45001:2018, ISO 14001:2015 Employee State Insurance Corporation Certificate Registration Certificate(ESIC), Fresh Bank solvency of Rs.-50.00 Lacs of Firm not more than 6 Months Agency, Labour License, Income Tax Returns certificate, LIN Certificate and ESI Challan's from last 6 Months Receipts.
 - An Affidavit duly registered before the Court /Public Notary certifying that there is nothing outstanding from any Municipal Body of Urban Local Bodies Kashmir.
 - Defaulter Persons are not allowed to participate in the bid.
 - The second cover should contain financial bid dully offered in a neat and clean manner recorded in both words and figures with a paste of transparent tape upon the level of offered bid.
 - While opening the tenders the constituted team will in the first step open the cover of qualifying criteria bid. Once the qualifying criteria cover is found up to level then the financial bid will be opened.
 - The intending bidder shall be bound to accompany Call Deposit Receipt (CDR) for an amount of Rs. 2,00,000/- (Rupees Two Lacs only) and Tender Document fee of Rs. 3500/- (Three Thousand, Five Hundred only) as per above referred details from any Nationalized/ Scheduled Bank pledged to Chief Executive Officer Municipal Council, Ganderbal without which no bid document can be issued.
 - The persons /parties against whom any outstanding amount exists on the records of this department on account of any type of contract cannot participate in the bid. If any such person who participated in the bid and later on the outstanding surfaced before the department / Municipality, his contract shall be seized along with his CDR.
 - The outsource labours will work as Sanitation workers round the clock at Maingam Yatra Base Camp in Shift manner.
 - The selected agency shall be bound to deploy 30% of Female staff against the total outsource personnel's.
 - The payment will be made to the concerned agency after receiving the attendance Certificate (Muster Roll) from the Sanitary Inspector on monthly basis.
 - The rates offered by the interested parties shall be inclusive of all applicable taxes.
 - In-case of any dispute arising between the parties with respect of any of the conditions as laid down here in above or any ambiguity the same will be referred to the arbitrator (i.e) Director Urban Local Bodies Kashmir and the decision of the Arbitrator shall be final and binding upon both the parties.
 - The successful bidder shall be bound not to sublet the contract to any other person /parties/ firm.
 - If the progress of the agency remains successful, the term of contract will be extended after obtaining approval from the competent Authority.
- Instructions to the Bidders regarding E- Tendering process:**
- To participate in bidding process, bidders have to 'JKTENDERS Portal'.
 - Bids will be opened online as per time schedule.
 - Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with the bid.
 - Note: - Scan all the documents on 100 dpi with black and white option.
 - The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission due to any reasons.
 - Income Tax from last Three Years.
 - Bidder should have at least one work order more than 30.00 Lacs
 - The Bidder must have to upload (soft copies) of the following documents (Photostat/Original should be clearly seen in all respect with Ink Signed and Seal):-
 - Valid original Bank Challan/Receipt
 - Call Deposit Receipt (CDR)
 - Valid PAN/TAN Card No. Aadhaar Card and Domicile Certificate.
 - Court Affidavit.
 - The Bidder should upload the Tender Document form attached below (Not Mandatory).
 - Bidder must ensure to upload scanned copies of all necessary documents including
 - BID Securing Declaration and tender documents fee in terms of soft copies with technical bid. No document (s) which has / have not been uploaded shall not be entertained in the form of hard copy. However, in case of any clarification the bidders shall have to produce original documents in support of soft copies if need arises.
 - Local Domicile Kashmir Province Requirement for Operational Efficiency
 - The bidder/contractor must be a domicile of Kashmir Province only. This condition is essential considering the nature of sanitation services, which require immediate availability of manpower, especially for early morning operations, emergency sanitation drives, and unforeseen situations such as medical exigencies, natural calamities, or public health concerns.
 - A locally based contractor shall be in a position to ensure prompt replacement of workers, maintain punctuality, and guarantee continuity of essential municipal services without disruption.
 - Submission of Wage Records Prior to Payment
 - The contractor shall submit detailed wage payment records/sheets of all engaged sanitation workers on a monthly basis. These records must clearly indicate worker details, attendance, wage rates, and payment acknowledge Jktendersents.
 - No payment shall be released by Municipal Council Ganderbal unless such records are verified and found satisfactory. Failure to comply shall render the claim liable for rejection without assigning any reason.
 - Adherence to Minimum Wages and Affidavit Requirement
 - The contractor shall ensure that wages paid to sanitation workers are not less than the minimum wages prescribed by the Government from time to time.
 - The contractor shall also submit a duly attested affidavit clearly stating the wage structure and confirming that payments are being made in compliance with government norms.
 - Condition for Release of Monthly Payments
 - This office shall release payment to the contractor strictly on a monthly basis, subject to:
 - Certification of satisfactory service delivery, and submission of proof of full disbursement of wages to workers for the previous month
 - Any delay or discrepancy in wage payment shall result in withholding of the contractor's bill.
 - Compliance with Labour Laws
 - The contractor shall strictly adhere to all applicable labour laws, rules, and regulations, including but not limited to provisions related to wages, working conditions, social security, and safety of sanitation workers.
 - Any violation shall be treated as a breach of contract and may lead to termination, apart from legal action as warranted.
 - General Clause/rules shall be applicable to contract
 - Further details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned on any working day during office hours

No: MC/Gb/2026/1818-20
Dated: 22/05.2026.

DIPK-NB-578/26
DATED: 22-05-2026

Sd
Chief Executive Officer,
Municipal Council Ganderbal.

US says 'slight progress' in Iran talks amid uncertainty on whether war will resume

AP

Tel Aviv, May 22: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Friday there was "slight progress" during talks with Iran amid uncertainty as to whether a deal will be reached or war will resume.

He spoke days after US President Donald Trump said he was holding off on a military strike on Iran because "serious negotiations" were underway. Trump has been threatening for weeks that the ceasefire reached in mid-April could end if Iran does not make a deal, with shifting parameters for striking such an agreement.

Rubio spoke ahead of a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Helsingborg, Sweden, where the military alliance is expected to discuss what role it could play in helping police the Strait of Hormuz once the war is over.

Rubio said he didn't want to exaggerate the progress, saying there had been "a little bit of movement and that's good." He said the conversations were ongoing. Still, in recent weeks there have been repeated claims of progress, yet a deal has not been reached.

Trump has repeatedly set deadlines for Tehran and then backed off. But he's also previously indicated he would hold off on military action to allow talks to continue — only to turn around and launch strikes.

That's what happened at the war's outset, when he ordered strikes in late February shortly after indicating he would let talks play out.

He said he called off attacks this week on Iran at the request of allies in the Middle East, including the leaders of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, who have been targeted by Iran and its allied militias.

But Trump's decision to give the talks a chance sparked tension this week with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin



Netanyahu.

An official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media said Thursday that Trump and Netanyahu had a "dramatic" phone conversation on Tuesday about the status of the Iranian negotiations and that Israel is angry with Trump's efforts to strike a deal with Iran.

Trump later told reporters that Netanyahu will "will do whatever I want him to do."

The comments are some of the first public signs of daylight between the leaders since they launched the war in February.

Ceasefire efforts continue but sticking points remain.

On Friday, Pakistan said that the interior minister travelled to Tehran twice this week to meet Iranian leaders as part of efforts to ease tensions between Iran and the United States.

At a weekly news briefing in the capital, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said Pakistan's political and military leadership were working to promote peace and that the minister's two visits were a testament to

that. He said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will travel to Beijing on Saturday at China's invitation, for a four-day visit, adding that Pakistan's peace efforts are expected to be discussed during the trip.

Still, major sticking points remain. Iran has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for the shipment of oil, gas, fertiliser and other petroleum products. The US is blockading Iranian ports and has redirected 85 commercial vessels from mid-April through Monday, US Central Command said in a social media post.

The US and Israel have said Iran can never have a nuclear weapon. While Iran was said to include some nuclear concessions, Trump has said he wants to remove highly enriched uranium from the country and prevent it from developing nuclear weapons.

Iran says its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes.

Officials say Saudi Arabia and the UAE separately struck Iran

Two regional officials and a western diplomat told the Associated Press that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates separately launched multiple

attacks on Iran and Iranian-backed Shiite militias in Iraq, during the war. An Israeli military officer with knowledge of the situation also confirmed that the UAE proactively struck Iran at least once.

All of them spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the information.

The regional officials said the strikes on Iran targeted military facilities, including missile and drone launchers, mostly belonging to the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

One of those regional officials said the strikes by Saudi Arabia targeted hideouts of Iraqi militias, mainly Kataib Hezbollah, after Riyadh assessed that most of the drone attacks on Saudi Arabia came from neighbouring Iraq.

He said Saudi Arabia has repeatedly briefed Baghdad about the Iraqi-originated attacks before deciding to strike.

The western diplomat and one of the regional officials said the UAE had pushed for a collective military response from the Gulf Arab countries since the onset of the war.

Asked for comment, the United Arab Emirates referred to a May 16 statement by its Foreign Ministry that "all measures undertaken by the UAE have been within the framework of defensive actions aimed at protecting its sovereignty, civilians, and vital infrastructure, in line with the country's legitimate right to safeguard its national security and maintain its stability."

Saudi Arabia did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Iran has also not publicly addressed being targeted by the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Following claims that attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE had been launched from Iraqi territory, the Iraqi prime minister also ordered an investigation.

Iraq's government did not respond to requests for comments.

AIIB announces USD 10 bn fund facility to support countries hit by West Asia conflict



PTI

Beijing, May 22: The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), in which India is the second-largest shareholder after China, has launched a USD 10-billion fund facility to provide support to member countries affected by the conflict in West Asia.

The Beijing-headquartered bank announced on Thursday that the Energy, Food Security and Economic Resilience Facility is open to its member countries whose development may have been affected by the conflict that has triggered energy shortages in large parts of the world.

Supplementing AIIB's regular financing instruments, the facility offers a time-bound financing envelope of up to USD 10 billion over two

years, which provides "exceptional financing support to its members and clients in addressing their acute needs for energy security, food security and economic resilience," AIIB said in a statement.

The AIIB, which began functioning in 2016, has more than 100 approved members worldwide, which include China, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Australia, Israel, Kuwait, Nepal, Oman, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and the UAE.

It is capitalised at USD 100 billion and is AAA-rated by major international credit rating agencies. According to the bank's official records, China is its largest shareholder with 26.54 per cent voting shares, followed by India (7.58 per cent), Russia (5.9 per cent) and Germany (4.1 per cent).

Rubio to tell NATO ministers Trump 'very disappointed' over Iran war stance

REUTERS

Helsingborg (Sweden), May 22: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will meet NATO allies on Friday for the first time since President Donald Trump called the alliance into question due to divisions over the Iran war and Washington announced plans to pull 5,000 troops from Europe. Before leaving for a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Sweden, Rubio said Trump was "very disappointed" in alliance members who had not allowed the US to use bases on their territory for the war, singling out Spain in particular.

"You have countries like Spain denying us the use of these bases — well then why are you in NATO? That's a very fair question," Rubio told reporters in Miami. "In fairness, other countries in NATO have been

very helpful. But we need to discuss that."

Trump has fiercely criticized NATO members for not doing more to help the US-Israeli military campaign. He has said he is considering withdrawing from the alliance and questioned whether Washington was bound to honor its mutual defense pact.

NATO officials have stressed the US did not ask the 32-member alliance to take part in the Iran war, but many members have honored commitments to allow US forces to use their airspace and bases on their territory.

European concerns about Trump's attitude toward NATO were also exacerbated this year by Trump's push to acquire Greenland, a territory of fellow NATO member Denmark.

Europeans say they are ready to help with Hormuz

Batting with Kohli made big difference in my growth, says Padikkal

PTI

Bengaluru, May 22: Royal Challengers Bengaluru batter Devdutt Padikkal says opening alongside Virat Kohli in his debut IPL season helped him understand the art of constructing an innings, a lesson that continues to shape his approach in T20 cricket.

Padikkal, who burst onto the scene with Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the 2020 IPL, said watching Kohli operate from close quarters gave him invaluable insight early in his career.

"When I made my IPL debut with RCB in the 2020 season, I felt ready. I had a solid run of scores in domestic cricket behind me," Padikkal said during an interaction on JioStar.

He'll make decision in best interest of team: Simons on Dhoni

PTI

Ahmedabad, May 22: Chennai Super Kings bowling coach Eric Simons said Mahendra Singh Dhoni alone will decide on his comeback, stressing that the veteran wicketkeeper-batter would only return if he feels fully fit and ready to contribute to the team.

Dhoni, 44, couldn't play a single game in this edition due to a leg injury but Simons said he impressed in the nets with his clean striking. "Are you seriously

asking me that question? We always are," Simons said when asked if CSK are hopeful of Dhoni's availability next year. "I mean, honestly, he has hit the ball so well. He obviously had a leg injury, which made it very difficult for him to run, so that's why he couldn't play."

"But in terms of hitting the ball in the nets, he's hitting it as well as I've ever seen him hit it. But I keep saying this, only MS will know, and MS will make the decision about when he's ready and when he's right."



Setback for Indian football in Asia

Only a play-off slot in third tier for clubs in 2027-28



PTI

New Delhi, May 22: The administrative mess in Indian football contributed to a new low in the continental stage as the country was handed just one play-off slot for the 2027-28 season of the AFC Challenge League, the third and last tier in Asia's club structure.

For a few years in the past, Indian clubs had even played in the group stage of the top-tier AFC Champions League (ACL), but have had to be content with ACL2 — the second tier — appearances in recent times.

India has been already allotted two play-off slots for the 2026-27 ACL 2. East Bengal, which won the Indian Super

League title on Thursday, and Super Cup champions FC Goa will feature in the ACL 2 play-offs round in July-August.

But for the 2027-28 season, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) on Friday, allocated just one play-off round slot for India in the third tier AFC Challenge League, which is meant for clubs from countries like Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh.

The AFC made the slot allocations for 2027-28 AFC Men's Club Competitions after the conclusion of the 2025-26 season in the member association countries.

The slot allocation for Asian club competitions is based on member association ranking

— which is different from FIFA rankings, which are based on national team performance.

This ranking is, in turn, based on criteria such as technical standard of domestic league, club licensing system, number of AFC compliant stadia, sporting integrity, governance and regulations, competition format, among others.

Regarding the competition format, the 2026 regulations of the AFC clearly states that each club in the domestic top division shall play a minimum of 24 matches per season, including the domestic top division league and domestic cup, if the member association aspires to play in the ACL Elite and ACL 2.

Movies SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, 23RD MAY

1	BHOOTH BANGLA (U/A16+)	Hindi — 03:45 PM
2	PATI PATNI AUR WOHO DO (U/A16+)	Hindi Atmos — 04:45 PM, 07:15 PM
3	STAR WARS: MANDALORIAN AND GROGU (U/A16+)	ENGLISH — 07:00 PM 3D ENGLISH ATMOS — 11:00 AM
4	CHAND MERA DIL (U/A16+)	HINDI ATMOS — 02:00 PM, 04:45 PM, 07:30 PM HINDI — 10:45 AM
5	DRISHYAM-3 (U/A16+)	MALAYALAM WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES — 01:30 PM
6	DHURANDHAR THE REVENGE (U/A16+)	HINDI — 11:20 AM

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