



Governance likely to be key agenda of CM's meeting with legislators

All independent MLAs supporting NC-led govt invited

Umer Maqbool

Srinagar, May 31: Governance is expected to be the key agenda of a high-level meeting to be chaired by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at his Gupkar residence on June 3, sources revealed.

Sources disclosed to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that apart from NC MLAs, the Chief Minister has also invited all independent MLAs supporting the ruling party.

They confirmed that four independents—Akram Choudhary (MLA Surankote),



Dr. Rameshwar Singh (MLA Bani), Muzaffar Iqbal Khan (MLA Thanamandi), and Pyare Lal Sharma (MLA Inderwal)-have also been invited.

According to sources, the functioning of ministers is also likely to be discussed in the meeting.

As reported exclusively by news agency—KNO, earlier, the CM's invitation letter to NC legislators stated that the meeting would deliberate upon "matters of collective importance and issues concerning public welfare."

Sources disclosed that the meeting comes in the backdrop of simmering discontent

among MLAs of a particular region against a minister in the government.

Three MLAs from the region had met the Chief Minister before Eid-ul-Adha, lodging serious complaints against the minister. They accused him of bias in the allotment of projects and funds, alleging that their constituencies were being neglected while the minister's own constituency was receiving a disproportionate share.

In the NC's provincial committee meeting held here earlier this month, a legislator from Central Kashmir | More on P6

PM Modi urges people to take precautions amid scorching heat

PTI

New Delhi, May 31: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged people to stay hydrated in view of soaring temperatures across the country.

In his monthly radio broadcast Mann Ki Baat, he said people should take extra precautions when stepping out in the sun.

"With temperatures soaring across much of the country, it is important to take extra care. Stay hydrated. If you need to step out in the sun, do so cautiously and take necessary precautions," he said.

"Keep drinking water. Don't forget the guidelines issued by various government departments in this regard either," he



said.

Prime Minister Modi had on Wednesday last also urged citizens to take maximum precautions as the country is witnessing soaring temperatures, and said staying hydrated is key during such harsh weather.

Modi also referred to the king of fruits, saying there is

hardly a home where mangoes are not talked about in the summer season.

He noted that every region has its own mango and its own aroma.

"Hapus or alphonso of Maharashtra, Kesar of Gujarat - these are the lifeblood of 'aam-ras'; Dussehari | More on P6

Radio Sharda founder, Gujjar Bakarwal body, social orgs call on LG Sinha

Lt Governor assures consideration of genuine concerns



KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 31: Ramesh Hangloo, Founder and Managing Director, Radio Sharda called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday. He was accompanied by Avtar Jotshi and Bharat Raina.

Subsequently, various delegations, including Gujjar Bakarwal Employees Association J&K-UT, led by Choudhary Intiyaz Kataria; Mohammad Faheem Reshi, Chairman, Greater Shahr-e-Khaas, a social organisation, and representatives of We The Helping Hand Foundation, led by its Chairman Umer Wani, also called on the Lieutenant Governor.

'Omar Abdullah won't resign even as executive councillor': LoP Sunil Sharma

» Says CM would accept below than UT-status 'as long as his protocol remains intact'

» 'Abdullah family got 50,000 Kashmiris killed for clinging to power'



Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, May 31: Ahead of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's meeting with NC legislators on Wednesday, Leader of Opposition Sunil Kumar Sharma on Sunday said that the Chief Minister would not resign even from the position of executive councillor, as long as his protocol remains intact.

Speaking to reporters, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Sharma said Omar Abdullah would accept any status for Jammu and Kashmir- even below that of a Union Territory -provided his protocol remains intact.

"Remember my prediction: no one, even from the next generations of the Abdullah family, would resign. The Abdullah family is seated on the Chief Minister's chair. God forbid, if Jammu & Kashmir gets Hill Council on the pattern of Ladakh, and Omar becomes an executive | More on P6

OUR CENSUS OUR DEVELOPMENT

Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh

Houselisting & Housing Census 1st to 30th June

What will you be asked?

Information of house: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building number • Materials of the floor, walls & ceiling • Ascertain use of the house- (Residential/Non-residential) • Condition of the house 	Basic information about the family: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of family members • Name, sex and caste of the head of the family (SC/ST or others) • Ownership status of the house • Number of rooms • Number of married couples living in the house 	Amenities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source of drinking water • Availability of drinking water source • Main source of lighting • Access to latrine • Type of latrine • Waste water outlet • Bathroom facilities • Kitchen and LPG/PNG connection • Main fuel used for cooking 	Assets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio/Transistor • Television • Access to internet Computer/Laptop • Mobile phone /Telephone • Two-wheeler/ Four-wheeler
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Govt prioritising surface connectivity in J&K: Deputy CM Inaugurates double-lane bridge at Greater Kailash

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MAY 31: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary Sunday inaugurated the newly constructed double-lane bridge over the Nallah at Greater Kailash in Jammu.

The Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, said that the government is deeply focused on creating robust surface connectivity across Jammu and Kashmir. He added that the inauguration of the bridge marks a significant step towards strengthening the urban connectivity and improving the public infrastructure in the region.

The newly constructed bridge is expected to provide seamless connectivity, ease traffic movement and enhance convenience for the residents of Greater Kailash and adjoining areas. The project has been executed to improve accessibility and support the growing transportation needs of the locality.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the government is working under a well knit system to ensure robust, inclusive and people-centric development across Jammu and Kashmir. He emphasized that strengthening the basic infrastructure remains a



key priority for the government, as it plays a crucial role in improving the quality of life of the people and accelerating socio-economic growth.

"The government is creating durable and modern infrastructure that directly benefits the public. Projects like this bridge not only improve the connectivity but also contribute to the overall development of the region," he asserted. The Deputy

Chief Minister also highlighted the government's continued efforts towards upgrading the road networks, bridges and other essential public infrastructure to meet the aspirations of the people and facilitate balanced development across the Union Territory.

Chief Engineer, Roads and Buildings (R&B), along with other senior officers of the department, were

present on the occasion. They briefed the Deputy Chief Minister about the technical aspects of the project and other ongoing infrastructure works in the area.

The local residents expressed satisfaction over the completion of the bridge and appreciated the government's efforts in enhancing the civic infrastructure and public convenience.

BOPEE conducts Pharmacy Common Entrance Test

1684 candidates appear with no unfair means reported



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MAY 31: The Jammu and Kashmir Board of Professional Entrance Examinations (J&K BOPEE) Sunday conducted the Common Entrance Test (CET) for B-Pharmacy and D-Pharmacy courses for the academic session 2026-27 at Jammu and Srinagar Centres.

The test, as per an official statement, was conducted at the University of Kashmir, Srinagar, in the Kashmir division and the Government College for

Women, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu, in the Jammu division, with 1684 candidates appearing from across Jammu and Kashmir. To ensure smooth conduct of the Entrance Test, adequate arrangements were made in collaboration with the respective institution/college administration and law enforcement agencies, under the guidance of Professor Minu Mahajan, Chairperson, J&K BOPEE.

The examination concluded without any untoward incidents or unfair means, under the

supervision of staff from the host institutions.

The Chairperson, along with the Members, the Secretary, the Controller of Examinations and officials of the J&K BOPEE actively monitored conduct of the Common Entrance Test at both the Centres in Jammu and Srinagar. They thanked the staff members of the respective institutions and the staff deployed under the overall supervision of Deputy Commissioners in the respective District Headquarters for smooth conduct of the entrance test.

DC Anantnag attends ongoing Holy Adhikmas Kumbh at Mattan

KT NEWS DESK

ANANTNAG, MAY 31: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, Sunday visited Mattan and attended the ongoing Holy Adhikmas Kumbh 2026 alongside the representatives of Shri Martand Tirath Trust (SMTT) and a large congregation of devotees.

The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR) Tariq Ahmad Malik, Tehsildar Mattan, senior officers of line departments and other concerned officials.

Notably, the month long religious congregation which commenced on May 17, is witnessing participation of devotees from different parts of the country. The pilgrims are visiting the revered place including the Holy Temple as well as the nearby Sacred River with enthusiasm and religious fervor to pay their obsequies and perform traditional rituals and prayers. During the visit, the DC attended the celebrations and ceremoniously participated in the rituals alongside the devotees. Interacting with them, the DC stated that the place has long stood as a great symbol of brotherhood and communal harmony, defining the region's shared heritage. He appreciated the spirit of unity among the people and urged everyone to continue preserving the rich cultural and religious heritage of the area. On the occasion, the DC reviewed the arrangements and impressed upon the concerned departments to ensure all necessary facilities are provided to the devotees in a smooth and uninterrupted manner. He instructed that all efforts be made to facilitate devotees enabling them to undertake a safe and comfortable pilgrimage.

The DC observed that the Holy Adhikmas Kumbh is not only a significant religious occasion but also presents apt opportunity to showcase the district's hospitality so the pilgrims leave with pleasant and lasting memories. He stressed upon the officers to ensure that all arrangements remain functional and effective on the ground.

Speaker inaugurates NTPHC at Challyan, emphasises easy access to essential amenities

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, MAY 31: In a major boost to the local healthcare infrastructure, Speaker Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, Sunday formally inaugurated a New Type Primary Health Centre (NTPHC) at Challyan, Charri-Sharief constituency.

The Speaker, as per an official statement, underscored that NTPHC is set to significantly augment the medical services in the area, bringing quality healthcare directly to the doorsteps of the local population. Following the inauguration, the Speaker addressed a large public gathering, where he highlighted the government's ongoing developmental achievements and welfare initiatives aimed at transforming the socio-economic landscape of the region.

Addressing the gathering, the Speaker emphasized that the primary focus of the administration remains the equitable development of all regions, with a special



emphasis on ensuring easy access to essential amenities.

"The government is deeply committed to provide top-tier basic facilities to the public. Our core priority sectors like Health, Roads, Education, Power and Clean Drinking Water are receiving unprecedented focus. The inauguration of this NTPHC is a testament to our resolve to ensure that no citizen has to travel long distances for fundamental medical care," the Speaker said.

Recalling establishment of

this health centre in 1979-80, he said it reflected his commitment to work for the remote, under developed and underprivileged communities of the region.

"Sunday, I see infrastructure like roads, drinking water, healthcare, electricity, education has reached every nook and corner of this constituency and people are harping on the benefits of these facilities at their doorsteps", he said.

He further elaborated on various ongoing

government schemes and urged the public to actively participate and avail benefit of these initiatives. He assured the community that the government will continue to accelerate infrastructure projects to ensure comprehensive growth and improve the overall quality of life for the common citizens.

The event was attended by CMO Budgam, senior administrative officials, prominent citizens and representatives from the health department.

SMC bids farewell to 4 senior officers on their Superannuation

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, MAY 31: Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) Sunday organised a farewell ceremony in honour of four of its senior officers on their superannuation after years of dedicated service.

The officers who retired from service include Joint Commissioner (Works) Shafat Ahmad Khan, Chief Sanitation Officer Mudasir Ahmad Bandy, Executive Engineer Nisar Ahmad Wangoo, and Executive Engineer Mushtaq Ahmad Nowshehri.

The function was presided over by Commissioner SMC, Faz Lul Haseeb, and attended by Joint Commissioners, Secretary, Health Officer, Superintending Engineer Drainage, and other senior officers and officials of the Corporation.

Speaking on the occasion, the Commissioner congratulated the retiring officers on the successful completion of their distinguished careers and appreciated their valuable contributions towards strengthening municipal governance, improving civic services, and serving the people of Srinagar. He wished them good health, happiness, and success in their future endeavours.

The retiring officers expressed their gratitude to the SMC administration and their colleagues for their support and cooperation throughout their service. They described their tenure in the Corporation as a rewarding and enriching experience and thanked the staff for their dedication and teamwork.

The ceremony concluded with the presentation of mementoes and best wishes to the retirees in recognition of their dedicated service and contributions to Srinagar Municipal Corporation.

Khet Bachao Abhiyan to be conducted across Jammu Division from June 1 to June 30

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, MAY 31: Under the directions of Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Rural Development, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who during a recent meeting through video conferencing emphasized that the "Khet Bachao Abhiyan" should not remain merely an awareness programme but evolve into a comprehensive national campaign connecting farms, farmers and villages, Director Agriculture Jammu, Anil Gupta Sunday chaired a high-level meeting to review and finalize preparations for the month-long campaign to be conducted across Jammu Division from June 1 to June 30.

During the meeting, Anil Gupta, as per an official statement, issued detailed directions to officers for ensuring the effective and result-oriented implementation of the campaign, with special focus on saving farms, reducing cultivation costs and providing timely, need-based technical guidance to farmers at the grassroots level.

Addressing the meeting, Director Agriculture emphasized that minimizing the indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers would be one of the prime objectives of the campaign. He said that farmers would be sensitized about the balanced use of fertilizers and other agricultural inputs based on soil testing. Special efforts will be made for the distribution of Soil



Health Cards and motivating farmers to adopt green manures, organic inputs and bio-products to improve soil health and farm sustainability.

Anil Gupta informed that multidisciplinary teams comprising officials from Agriculture Universities, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and the Agriculture Department have been constituted for the campaign. These teams will undertake Panchayat-level visits across Jammu Division and directly interact with farmers to create awareness and provide field-specific advisories.

The Director urged all Chief Agriculture Officers (CAOs) to ensure the successful implementation of the campaign in their respective districts. He said that efforts would also be made to involve

the participation of Ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assembly and other public representatives so that the campaign transcends the boundaries of an administrative programme and emerges as a robust model of public participation.

He further informed that during the campaign, farmers will be made aware of the benefits of Natural Farming and sustainable agricultural practices. Simultaneously, enforcement drives will be intensified to ensure the quality of pesticides and other agricultural inputs available in the market.

Director Agriculture stated that saturation drives under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) and PM-KISAN schemes will also be undertaken to ensure that all eligible farmers are covered and receive the benefits of these flagship programmes. Awareness programmes on the Mission on Aatmanirbharta in Pulses and the National Mission on Edible Oils will also be organized and farmers will be encouraged to actively participate in these initiatives.

The campaign will also provide farmers with constructive suggestions regarding suitable crop options, crop diversification and climate-resilient farming practices, particularly in areas facing water scarcity or other agricultural risks. The objective is to help farmers make informed decisions that enhance productivity, profitability and sustainability.

Nasha Mukh J&K Campaign

First-Ever Night Kabaddi Tournament held in Rajouri

KT NEWS DESK

RAJOURI, MAY 31: In a landmark initiative under the ongoing 100 Days Campaign of the Nasha Mukh Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan, the Department of Youth Services and Sports (YSS), Rajouri, under the guidance of DC Rajouri Abhishek Sharma Sunday organized the first-ever Night Kabaddi Tournament for Boys and Girls at the Mini Stadium Sports Complex, Rajouri.

The historic event witnessed enthusiastic participation from young sportspersons and sports enthusiasts, transforming the stadium into a vibrant arena of athletic excellence, discipline and sportsmanship. The tournament marked a significant milestone in the district's sporting journey and reflected the growing enthusiasm for sports among the youth.

The event was graced by Principal Government Boys Model Higher Secondary School Rajouri, Muslim Wani, as the Chief Guest, while Principal Army Goodwill Public School Rajouri, Gurnam Kour attended as the Guest of Honour.

Addressing the participants, the

dignitaries appreciated the efforts of the Youth Services and Sports Department in providing meaningful sporting opportunities to the youth and promoting the message of a healthy and drug-free society through sports. They particularly lauded the dedicated efforts and visionary leadership of District Youth Services and Sports Officer Rajouri, Wali Mohd for successfully conceptualizing and organizing the historic tournament.

The speakers emphasized that sports play a vital role in shaping character, building confidence, fostering discipline and steering youth away from social evils, particularly drug abuse. They expressed hope that such innovative sporting events would continue to inspire young people and strengthen the sporting ecosystem across the district.

The tournament was organized in line with the vision of Commissioner Secretary, Youth Services and Sports, Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, whose commitment towards youth empowerment, grassroots sports development and the creation of a drug-free Jammu and Kashmir continues to inspire sporting initiatives

across the Union Territory.

The event was conducted under the guidance of Director General, Youth Services and Sports, Anuradha Gupta, whose continued support and encouragement have significantly strengthened sports infrastructure and expanded opportunities for young athletes across Jammu and Kashmir.

District Youth Services and Sports Officer Rajouri, Wali Mohd reiterated the department's commitment to providing a vibrant sporting environment for the youth and advancing the objectives of the Nasha Mukh Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan. He highlighted that sports remain one of the most effective tools for promoting healthy lifestyles, fostering unity and developing responsible citizens.

The tournament concluded amid great enthusiasm and appreciation from participants, officials and spectators, further reinforcing Rajouri's emergence as a vibrant sporting hub and setting a new benchmark for future sporting events in the district.

IGP Jammu reviews SANJY-2026 preparedness

Stresses foolproof security arrangements

KT NEWS DESK

Kathua / Samba, May 31: To review security and facilitation arrangements for the forthcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY)-2026, IGP Jammu Zone Bhim Sen Tuti, accompanied by DIG JSK Range Shridhar Patil; DC Kathua Rajesh Sharma; SSP Kathua Mohita Sharma; SO to IGP Jammu SSP Rajinder Singh and other senior officers, conducted an extensive review of preparations in Kathua and Samba districts.

The IGP first visited Lakhampur and inspected the Base Camp, Langar Points, Lodgement Centres and Reception Centres. Security deployment, CCTV coverage, access control measures, frisking arrangements, traffic management and pilgrim facilities were reviewed on the ground.

A comprehensive security review meeting on SANJY-2026 was later held at DPL Kathua. The meeting was attended by supervisory officers, including SP SOG Jammu, Addl. SP Kathua, SP Operations Upper Kathua, SP Ops Border Kandi Kathua, all SDPOs and SHOs of NHW Kathua. SSP Kathua Ms. Mohita Sharma, IPS gave a detailed presentation on security arrangements, surveillance



measures, convoy management, QRT deployment and emergency response plans.

Addressing the officers, the IGP stressed maximum alertness, strict adherence to security protocols and professional conduct with pilgrims. The DIG JSK Range directed officers to regularly inspect Langars and lodgement centres and maintain close surveillance on suspicious elements. The IGP subsequently reviewed arrangements in District Samba, where SSP Samba Anuj Kumar briefed him on the district's preparedness

for SANJY-2026. A security review meeting was also held, which was attended by DIG JSK Range, senior officers, all supervisory officers and SHOs of the district. The IGP emphasized close coordination among J&K Police, CAPFs, intelligence agencies and Punjab Police to ensure a safe, secure and smooth Yatra for all pilgrims.

During the review meetings in both districts, officers were directed to intensify drone surveillance for real-time monitoring and deploy Dog Squads for anti-sabotage

checks at vital installations, Langars and lodgement centres. Emphasis was laid on strengthening surveillance and ensuring swift response capabilities.

Directions were also issued to strengthen security along the National Highway and border areas through round-the-clock domination, naka checking and area patrols. Officers were instructed to expedite tenant verification and census drives and enhance CCTV coverage at all important Yatra locations with 24x7 monitoring.

Satish Sharma bats for modern transport to boost J&K's growth

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 31: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports, Transport, and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma on Sunday underscored the importance of modern transportation, tourism promotion, innovation and entrepreneurship in driving Jammu and Kashmir's economic transformation.

The Minister was speaking after inaugurating a fleet of Volvo buses introduced by Star World Ventures at Countryside Resort, Srinagar. The initiative is expected to strengthen the transportation facilities, improve tourist mobility and enhance connectivity across the Union Territory.

Addressing the gathering, Satish Sharma said that world-class transport infrastructure is essential for promoting tourism, facilitating trade and accelerating economic development. He said that the introduction of premium transport services would significantly enhance the travel experience for both the tourists and the residents while contributing to the sustained growth of Jammu and Kashmir's tourism sector.

The event was attended by MLA Eidgah Mubarak Gul, senior government officers, representatives of the tourism and business sectors and members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industries Kashmir (CCIK).

The Minister appreciated the efforts of the organisers in introducing the modern transportation



facilities and reiterated the government's commitment towards upgrading the transport infrastructure, promoting sustainable tourism and encouraging private sector participation in key developmental sectors.

Later, Satish Sharma visited the Rang-e-Kashmir Exhibition at Sher-i-Kashmir Park, Srinagar, where he interacted with the entrepreneurs, artisans, startups and exhibitors showcasing the local products, handicrafts, innovations and the rich cultural heritage of Jammu & Kashmir.

Commending the participants for their contribution to

economic activity and employment generation, the Minister said that entrepreneurship, innovation and technology-driven initiatives are emerging as powerful engines of growth for Jammu and Kashmir. He emphasized the need to create a supportive ecosystem that enables the young entrepreneurs and innovators to translate ideas into successful enterprises.

The Minister also emphasized the need to provide greater market access and institutional support to the local artisans, startups and small businesses to help them compete effectively in national and global markets.

Dr Farooq urges prompt measures on Hajj pilgrims' luggage issue



DR. FAROOQ EMPHASISED THAT THE PILGRIMS had packed their belongings in accordance with the baggage limits communicated to them. "Are they supposed to discard their belongings? If the authorities are unable to transport the luggage as promised, the affected pilgrims must be adequately compensated," he said.

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 31: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference President Dr. Farooq Abdullah on Sunday expressed serious concern over the difficulties being faced by Hajj pilgrims from Jammu and Kashmir, following reports that airlines have curtailed baggage allowances and informed pilgrims that their luggage would be transported separately by road from Ahmedabad.

In a statement Dr. Farooq said he was deeply disturbed by reports that Hajj pilgrims travelling from Jeddah to Srinagar were being subjected to immigration and customs clearance procedures at Ahmedabad and were being asked to send their luggage separately by road. He noted that the same baggage had been permitted during their departure journey and that they have already paid for the said service.

"Our Hajj pilgrims do not

deserve such treatment after completing one of the most sacred journeys of their lives. The concerned authorities, particularly the union Civil Aviation minister must immediately intervene and ensure that pilgrims are not subjected to unnecessary inconvenience and hardship upon their return," he said.

Dr. Farooq emphasised that the pilgrims had packed their belongings in accordance with the baggage limits communicated to them. "Are they supposed to discard their belongings? If the authorities are unable to transport the luggage as promised, the affected pilgrims must be adequately compensated," he said.

Calling for urgent corrective measures, Dr. Farooq urged the authorities to respect the dignity and sentiments of the Hajj pilgrims and ensure that their return journey is smooth, hassle-free and befitting the sanctity of the pilgrimage they have undertaken.

World No Tobacco Day

DLSA G'bl conducts anti-tobacco awareness campaigns

KT NEWS DESK

Ganderbal, May 31: In observance of World No Tobacco Day 2026, a series of door-to-door awareness campaigns were conducted across various areas of District Ganderbal under the directions of the Secretary, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Ganderbal, through Adhikar Mitras as part of the ongoing efforts to promote public health awareness and legal literacy.

Chulam Jeelani Raina and Amreena Naaz conducted an awareness campaign from Ganiwan to Dardwooder, educating the public about the harmful effects of tobacco consumption and encouraging a tobacco-free lifestyle. The programme highlighted the serious health risks associated with smoking and other forms of tobacco use, including cancer, heart disease, and respiratory illnesses, while emphasizing the role of youth in spreading awareness and discouraging tobacco use.

Aasiya Mohi-ud-Din conducted a door-to-door awareness drive in the Kangan

area, where residents were sensitized about the adverse effects of tobacco consumption, the importance of quitting tobacco, and the need to protect youth from tobacco addiction.

The participants were also informed about free legal aid services available through DLSA Ganderbal and were encouraged to report violations relating to the sale of tobacco products near educational institutions.

Yasir Nissar Bhat carried out an awareness campaign in the Prang area of Manigam, interacting with local residents and shopkeepers regarding the harmful effects of tobacco, smoking, and drug addiction. Shopkeepers were requested not to sell tobacco products to minors and to strictly adhere to the applicable laws and government guidelines regulating tobacco sales.

Nawaz Sharif Khatana conducted an awareness programme at Urpash Shajinagh and adjoining areas, focusing on the harmful effects of smoking, chewing tobacco, and emerging nicotine products such as vapes and

nicotine pouches. The participants were also sensitized about the 2026 World No Tobacco Day theme, "Unmasking the Appeal: Countering Nicotine and Tobacco Addiction," and informed about legal provisions prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors and near educational institutions.

Bilal Ahmad Kumar and Gh. Nabi Tali conducted awareness programmes in Wakura, Dab, Batwina, and adjoining areas. The campaign focused on creating awareness regarding the provisions of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003, and sensitizing the public and shopkeepers about restrictions on the sale of tobacco products to minors and near schools. Participants were encouraged to contribute towards building a healthy and tobacco-free society.

Heaba Mushtaq conducted a similar awareness campaign in Ganderbal, while Mukhtar Ahmad Raina carried out a programme in Gund, Hanan, and adjoining areas. Both programmes focused on the health risks associated with tobacco consumption, legal

safeguards under anti-tobacco laws, and the importance of protecting young people from nicotine addiction.

Bisma Bashir also conducted a door-to-door awareness campaign in Kondbal and Potermulla areas, sensitizing residents and shopkeepers regarding the harmful effects of tobacco consumption and the provisions of COTPA, 2003.

During all the programmes, special emphasis was laid on preventing tobacco use among youth, creating awareness about tobacco-related diseases, ensuring compliance with anti-tobacco laws, and promoting healthy lifestyles. The public was encouraged to become active participants in the fight against tobacco addiction and to support efforts aimed at creating a healthier and tobacco-free society. The awareness programmes received an encouraging response from the local communities, who appreciated the efforts of DLSA Ganderbal in spreading awareness regarding public health, legal rights, and social responsibility at the grassroots level.

Srinagar Police give warm send-off to retiring officers

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 31: Srinagar Police organized a farewell ceremony at the District Police Headquarters, Srinagar, to honour five retiring officers for their dedicated service to the Jammu and Kashmir Police.

The officers who superannuated include; Sr. PO Mohd Shafi Baba, SI Gulzar Ahmad Shah, SI Shagooof Ahmad Khan, SI Abdul Hamid Sheikh and HC Ali Mohd Bhat. All the officers have rendered long years of sincere, dedicated, and commendable service to the department.

Senior Superintendent of Police Srinagar, Dr. G.V. Sundeep Chakravarthy, IPS, lauded the retirees for their unwavering commitment, professionalism, and integrity throughout their careers. He expressed deep appreciation for their valuable contributions and extended his best wishes for a healthy, peaceful, and fulfilling post-retirement life.

The function was also attended by SP Headquarters Shri Umar Shah, DySP Headquarters Ms. Syed Sleet Shah, DySP DAR Nazir Ahmad, and other officers, who joined in expressing their gratitude and admiration for the retiring personnel.

As a token of recognition, SSP Srinagar presented Certificates of Appreciation to the retirees, acknowledging their dedicated service and significant role in maintaining law and order over the years.

Police hold awareness programme, inspect chemist shops in Sopore

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 31: As part of the ongoing 100-Day Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyaan, J&K Police in Sopore carried out a series of enforcement and community outreach activities today to strengthen the fight against drug abuse and promote drug-free communities.

J&K Police conducted thorough inspections of chemist and druggist shops in Chankhan and Naseem Bagh areas falling within the jurisdiction of Police Station Tarzoo. The drive aimed to ensure strict compliance with the provisions of the Drugs & Cosmetics Act and prevent the illegal sale or diversion of psychotropic and habit-forming

drugs. Sale records, prescriptions, and other relevant documents were scrutinized, while shop owners were sensitized about their legal responsibilities and the consequences of violations.

In continuation of the campaign, a village-level awareness programme was organized at Aalibagh, Hygam under the banner of the Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyaan—strict enforcement against drug peddlers and traffickers, coupled with sustained public awareness and community participation. The public has been urged to actively cooperate with law enforcement agencies in the collective effort to build a safer, healthier, and drug-free society.

Police remains committed to a two-pronged strategy under the 100-Day Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyaan—strict enforcement against drug peddlers and traffickers, coupled with sustained public awareness and community participation. The public has been urged to actively cooperate with law enforcement agencies in the collective effort to build a safer, healthier, and drug-free society.

Raids at suspected drug hotspots in Awantipora

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, May 31: Under the ongoing Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyaan, J&K police continued their sustained efforts against drug abuse and narcotics related activities by conducting raids and searches at suspected drug hotspots in villages including Darganie Gund, Arupal and other areas of Police District Awantipora.

The raids were carried out as part of the intensified anti narcotics campaign aimed at identifying individuals involved in drug-related activities, dismantling narcotics networks and preventing the spread of substance abuse among youth.

Police reiterated their commitment towards making society drug free and urged the general public to cooperate with law enforcement agencies by sharing any information related to drug peddling or substance abuse. The campaign combines enforcement measures with public awareness initiatives to curb the menace of drugs across the region.

EDITORIAL

A Sacred Journey Must Not End In Frustration

The Hajj pilgrimage is one of the most sacred journeys a Muslim can undertake. For months, pilgrims prepare physically, financially, and spiritually. They save money, seek forgiveness, and look forward to returning home with gifts and blessings for their families. The last thing they need, as they prepare to return, is unnecessary stress over baggage. Unfortunately, this is exactly what pilgrims from Jammu and Kashmir are facing this year. The decision to reduce the traditional

40-kilogram luggage allowance and send most of their belongings separately by road from Ahmedabad to Srinagar has caused genuine resentment. Pilgrims have every right to be concerned. They have purchased gifts and essential items for their families over the weeks of staying in the holy land. Now they are being told that only 5 kilograms of check-in baggage and 7 kilograms of hand baggage will be allowed on their return flights. The remaining 30 kilograms will travel separately by road

and will arrive after several days. The Haj Committee's explanation about runway maintenance at Srinagar Airport is understandable. Technical and operational limitations are real. However, the timing and communication of this decision have caused unnecessary confusion and worry. Elderly pilgrims, in particular, are stressed. They worry about damaged belongings, delayed deliveries, and the safety of items that hold emotional and financial value. The government must step in immediately.

First, the Haj Committee should ensure that the road transport of baggage is handled with extreme care, proper tracking, and insurance coverage for any loss or damage. Second, clear communication should be provided to every pilgrim about exactly when and where their baggage will arrive. Third, a grievance redressal mechanism should be set up at Srinagar Airport to handle any issues on the spot. It is also important that future Hajj planning takes such operational limitations into account well

in advance. Pilgrims should not be surprised by last-minute changes. The sacred journey deserves dignity from start to finish. Minister Sakeena Itoo has assured that the concerns will be "thoroughly examined". This is a welcome statement, but words must now translate into action. Let the pilgrims return home with peace of mind, not anxiety over luggage. They have fulfilled their spiritual duty. Now it is the government's duty to ensure that their homecoming is smooth, respectful, and stress-free.

How To Build A Sovereign AI Stack

The most important interface of the AI age cannot become a means of extracting money or data from people

Jayant Sinha

Discussions about "AI sovereignty" generally focus on two things: investment and capabilities. Countries are encouraged to fund national champions that can develop frontier AI models, build compute clusters and assemble domestic data pipelines. But while these steps do matter, they cannot, by themselves, deliver true AI sovereignty. For that, a fully contestable and interoperable AI stack is essential.

An AI stack contains multiple interdependent layers. Energy infrastructure feeds compute clusters. Compute (processing power) enables the training and operation of foundation AI models. Foundation models are wrapped in orchestration layers and deployed through cloud platforms. Applications and agents sit on top. Each layer must be contestable (firms can enter and exit the market easily), which depends partly on interoperability (different tools, models and systems can exchange information).

A contestable stack expands the market for the leading model providers, lowers input costs for the downstream firms that build on top of them and prevents the most advanced AI companies from becoming economic chokepoints. If a country secures contestability at only one layer, it might still find itself a price taker at the others, because powerful firms use their dominance in one layer to capture adjacent layers through bundled pricing, interlocking investment, privileged access and exclusive partnerships.

The first pillar of a sovereign AI stack is thus ex-ante competition regulation. Some jurisdictions are already delivering this. The EU's Digital Markets Act establishes criteria to identify "gatekeepers," interoperability mandates and prohibitions on self-preferencing. Similarly, the UK's Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act empowers the Competition and Markets Authority's Digital Markets Unit to assign major tech firms Strategic Market Status, thereby subjecting them to enforceable "conduct requirements," including interoperability and



self-preferencing rules.

India is headed in this direction as well. In 2022, the Standing Committee on Finance, which I then chaired, released a report calling for an ex-ante framework for digital markets to prevent anticompetitive practices by Big Tech. This led to the creation of the Committee on Digital Competition Law, which in 2024 produced a draft Digital Competition Bill. While that bill was withdrawn last year, revisions are underway.

In the US, competition law has long sought to ensure contestability. This was true of the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890, the AT&T Consent Decree of 1982 and the prosecution of Microsoft in 1998. Most recently, the Federal Trade Commission and Department of Justice under then-President Joe Biden's administration revived antitrust enforcement, with a focus on data network effects, multisided platform dynamics and

algorithmic foreclosure in digital markets. But the country has yet to commit to contestability in the AI stack.

In any case, given the speed at which AI markets concentrate, regulation alone cannot preserve contestability. The second pillar of a sovereign AI stack is architectural: contestability must be built into the rails that underpin digital systems.

India's Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture shows how this can work in practice. It establishes consent-based "data rails," which enable individuals to share their information across financial institutions, healthcare systems and telecommunications services in a manner that is secure, transparent and traceable, while allowing regulators to gain insight into system behavior without needing vast supervisory agencies.

The same architectural logic can be

applied to compute, models and agents. While these rails are not bound by national borders, each country would use them in determining its preferred balance between risk and innovation, and it would retain sovereignty over the AI systems operating within its jurisdiction, no matter where the underlying compute resides.

The third pillar of a sovereign AI stack also transcends borders: a shared open-weight AI-model pathway available to all countries. Open weights — when the trained parameters that define a model's behavior are publicly released — make models genuinely interoperable in ways that closed application programming interfaces do not. Open-weight models can be inspected, adapted and deployed within national jurisdictions on terms each country defines.

What the world needs is a privately funded open-weight architecture for AI on

the scale of Red Hat's cloud infrastructure. A consortium of middle powers should encourage the creation of such an architecture and a foundation with a golden share (such as the Robert Bosch Stiftung) should be tasked with governing it, both to preserve its openness and to ensure safe model deployment. A tiered approach to model release, backed by rigorous evaluation and guided by shared safety standards, is essential.

The fourth pillar of sovereign AI is the consumer interface. Agents are becoming the primary gateway through which citizens access information and services. Systemically significant digital enterprises should be required to provide a free agent that meets clearly defined safety standards, preserves privacy and is interoperable with other agents. India's Unified Payments Interface, for example, is a real-time digital payments system that enables people to send money, pay bills and manage multiple bank accounts in a single mobile application. While premium services may sit above the baseline, the most important interface of the AI age cannot become a means of extracting money or data from people.

Paradoxically, no country can build the architecture of AI sovereignty alone. Coalitions of countries must work together to regulate the sector, design and operate the rails, open the model layer, and universalize the agent interface, thereby ensuring contestability, interoperability and accountability at every layer of the stack. The challenge is formidable, not least because these coalitions will have to manage tense trade-offs — between openness and safety, sovereignty and interoperability, and regulation and innovation. But the imperative is clear.

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Iran needs to come to terms with Gulf neighbors

If Iran can get the Gulf nations on its side, the US will have less space to renege on a deal.

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

The US is oscillating between deal or no deal with Iran. Every day we see media reports about differing conditions for the signing of an agreement, or a ceasefire, or a memorandum of understanding. Even if a deal is reached, it will be more of a framework for an agreement. Hence the path to a final accord still lies ahead of us and is still not secure. However, Iran could play it smart; it could hedge its bets and the best way to do that would be to start negotiating with the Arab Gulf states, and Saudi Arabia in particular.

Before sending his latest proposal to Tehran, US President Donald Trump took part in a group call with his country's allies in the region: the Arab Gulf states, as well as Pakistan, Jordan, and Türkiye. Unlike his predecessor, Barack Obama, who sealed a deal with Iran behind the backs of his allies, Trump wanted to have everyone on board before sending an offer to Iran. It is, therefore, in the interests of Tehran also to get those states on its side, especially Saudi Arabia.

Trump is known to be unpredictable. At the last minute he added another factor into the mix, another condition to his "deal" for everyone: He required all states involved in the agreement — in other words those who were on the group call with him — to join the Abraham Accords and normalize relations with Israel. This condition might be just for show. It might also be a ploy to render a deal impossible and allow him to blame its failure on allies in the region. This would help Trump evade, to some extent, domestic criticism should he fail to cut a deal with the Iranians to end the war.



A woman walks past a large tiled image of Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei in

Regardless of the reasons for adding this illogical condition, one thing remains clear: countries in the region have a say in any deal between US and Iran. Based on discussions with Iranians and pro-Iran specialists, the perception of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, was that Washington at the time, under Obama, viewed Tehran as a power to be reckoned with. In this respect,

the US seemed prepared to recognize Iran's status as the one and only regional superpower.

This mentality should change. The idea that the US will accept Iranian dominance over the Gulf will lead nowhere and definitely not help Iran. In fact, it would serve only to entice the Arab Gulf nations to push back against Tehran. Iran should realize, therefore, that its best bet is to build good,

friendly, and respectful relation with its neighbors.

Since the present regime came to power in 1979, Iran has adopted a belligerent tone toward its neighbors. In other words, Tehran has willfully positioned itself as a threat to its Arab Gulf neighbors. It should understand that this animosity is not to its advantage. It should alter its belligerent approach, starting with a change to the preamble to its constitution about the export of its revolution. This first step should be followed by a frank discussion about security matters.

Iran's current negotiations with the Americans should also open up channels for talks with its Arab neighbors. This process should take place in good faith; the Iranians have a reputation for negotiating for the sake of negotiation, simply to buy time when they have no intention of making concessions. They bank on the fact that they have plenty of patience while the other parties do not.

This tactic will not work anymore. To enter into constructive negotiations that the Gulf nations will take seriously, Iran must therefore declare from the outset the concessions it is willing to make. The discussions can then focus on how to get there and what Tehran wants in return.

The Iranians should understand that the main issue for Arab states is nonstate actors; there can be no stability in the region as long as Tehran has armed proxies and sleeper cells operating under its control inside other countries. Iran must be willing to make concessions on this issue of nonstate actors, which it describes as its allies. This process should proceed in parallel with its negotiations with the Americans. If Iran can reach an agreement with the Arab Gulf

states, and Saudi Arabia in particular, it will have a much stronger position in its dealings with the US.

At the same time, an agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, or the wider Gulf region, would make it much easier for the US to make a deal with Iran. In fact, any concessions agreed by Iran in talks with Gulf states on the issue of nonstate actors could also be presented as concessions to the US, in return for which Tehran could extract concessions from Washington, such as the lifting of sanctions. In other words, Iran could reap double the benefits.

Iran should also remember that in the same way that Washington renege on the 2015 nuclear deal when Trump withdrew from the agreement in 2018, it could ultimately renege on any new deal. The only real guarantee for Iran, therefore, will come from building good relations with its neighbors. If Iran can get the Gulf nations, Saudi Arabia in particular, on its side, the US will have less space to shift the goalposts or renege on a deal, regardless of how much pressure might be applied by Israel.

The question now is whether the regime in Iran will adopt such a pragmatic approach, or remain stuck in a rigid ideological stance in the belief it is the right thing to do and will eventually win the day no matter what.

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The Sacred Legacy Of The Buddha's Chief Disciples

Why the relics of Arahant Sāriputta and Arahant Mahāmogallāna matter today

Vivek Aggarwal (IAS)

The holy relics of the two chief disciples of the Buddha – Arahant Sāriputta and Arahant Mahāmogallāna – will be travelling to Mongolia on board a special IAF aircraft for exposition at the Gandan Monastery, Ulaanbaatar, from June 1 to 10.

Sacred relics of the Buddha and his chief disciples, Arahant Sāriputta and Arahant Mahāmogallāna, enshrined in Ubun Ratchathani, Thailand, during the 2024 exposition hosted by India and Thailand.

For more than two millennia, the names of Arahant Sāriputta and Arahant Mahāmogallāna have held an unparalleled place of reverence in the Buddhist world. As the two chief disciples of Gautama Buddha, they were not only the Buddha's closest spiritual companions but also the foremost guardians and transmitters of the Dhamma after his enlightenment.

Buddhist tradition records that Sāriputta and Mahāmogallāna were born on the same day in neighbouring villages in the Magadha region, near present-day Nalanda. Sāriputta was born in Upatissa village, while Mahāmogallāna was born in Kolita village. Bound by friendship from childhood, the two seekers eventually renounced worldly life together in search of ultimate truth. Their spiritual journeys culminated under the Buddha, where they quickly emerged as the two most distinguished members of the early Sangha.

Sāriputta and Maudgalyāna becoming disciples of the Buddha, depicted in an early 20th-century carved elephant tusk relief from the Delhi region, now in the National Museum, New Delhi.

Sāriputta, known in Sanskrit as Śāriputra, became renowned as the supreme master of wisdom and doctrinal analysis. Buddhist scriptures describe him as possessing "extraordinary intellectual clarity" and an "unparalleled ability to explain the teachings with precision and compassion". He supervised



monastic discipline, guided meditation practice and became the first disciple authorised to ordain monks independently. Rāhula, the Buddha's son, was ordained as a novice monk (samāṇera) by Sāriputta, following the Buddha's direct instruction. Because of his leadership and mastery of the Dhamma, the Buddha conferred upon him the title "General of the Dhamma" (Dhammasenapati). According to Theravada Buddhist tradition, after attaining Enlightenment, the Buddha taught the Abhidhamma in the Tavatimsa heaven to the devas, including His mother who had been reborn there. During this period, the Buddha is said to have briefly returned each day to the human realm, where He summarised the teachings to Sāriputta, who then systematically transmitted these teachings to the masses.

Relics of Sāriputta and Maudgalyāna became celebrated as the foremost master of meditation and spiritual attainments. Buddhist literature describes him as possessing

profound meditative powers and the ability to perceive different realms of existence. Through encounters with devas, brahmas, and beings suffering in unhappy states, he illustrated the workings of karma and the realities of saṁsāra. His teachings gave followers a vivid understanding of the moral and spiritual consequences of human action. Arahant Mahāmogallāna was deeply trusted by Gautama Buddha as a teacher, spiritual guide, and protector of the early Sangha, often acting on the Buddha's behalf in matters of discipline and community leadership. He also played a crucial role in countering the schism created by Devadatta, helping reunite monks with the Buddha and preserve the unity of the Buddhist community.

The Sacred Relics And Their Enduring Reverence

The passing of Arahant Sāriputta and Arahant Mahāmogallāna was a deeply emotional moment for the Buddha and the Buddhist Sangha. Arahant Sāriputta attained final liberation shortly before the

Buddha's Mahāparinirvāṇa, on the full-moon day (Purnima) of the month Kattika/Kārtika (October/November), while Arahant Mahāmogallāna is traditionally regarded to have passed away about fifteen days later, on the new-moon day (Amāvasyā) of the same month.

In Buddhist tradition, they are regarded as sacred embodiments of spiritual attainment and living reminders of enlightenment. The holy relics of Arahant Sāriputta and Arahant Mahāmogallāna, therefore, hold exceptional significance, representing the realised Sangha as part of the Three Jewels of Buddha Dhamma. Across Buddhist cultures, these holy relics continue to inspire devotion, pilgrimage, and reflection. Their veneration symbolises the unbroken continuity of the Buddha's teachings from ancient India to the modern world. This reverence was dramatically demonstrated in Thailand in February 2024 during one of the most significant Buddhist state ceremonies in recent history.

Thailand's Historic 2024 Relic Exposition

The relics of Arahant Sāriputta and Arahant Mahāmogallāna travelled outside India for the first time on 23 February 2024, when Thailand hosted a grand state ceremony at Sanam Luang in Bangkok for the enshrinement of the sacred relics of the Buddha together with the relics of Arahant Sāriputta and Arahant Mahāmogallāna. The event was jointly presided over by Somdet Phra Sangharaja Sakon Maha Sanghapharinayok and Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin.

Organised through cooperation between the Royal Thai Government and the Government of India under the "Ganga-Mekong Holy Buddha Relics" initiative, the exposition formed part of the celebrations marking the auspicious occasion of Maha Vajiralongkorn's sixth-cycle anniversary. The Ministry of Culture of the Government of India and the International Buddhist Confederation played a significant role in coordinating the exposition by bringing in monks and academicians from India, and

also conducting a full-day Vipassana programme at Silpakorn University in Bangkok.

The event drew immense public devotion and international attention. Following the Bangkok exposition, the sacred relics travelled across Thailand, including Chiang Mai, Ubun Ratchathani, and Krabi – enabling around five million Buddhists from all regions of the country to pay homage to the relics.

Why The Relics Matter To Mongolia

The relevance of carrying the relics of Arahant Sāriputta and Arahant Mahāmogallāna to Mongolia lies in their role as Dhamma carriers – pillars of the early Sangha whose lives exemplified the transmission and safeguarding of the Buddha's teachings. The Holy Relics of His two chief disciples symbolise the preservation, interpretation, and transmission of that Enlightenment into the world.

Arahant Sāriputta and Arahant Mahāmogallāna represent the experiential realisation of the Dhamma through profound practice. Together, the two disciples came to embody the complementary pillars of Buddhist practice: wisdom and realisation, doctrine and direct experience.

Their Holy Relics, therefore, symbolise the living principles through which liberation becomes possible, thus representing the realised Sangha in its purest form. Honouring them is, in effect, honouring the successful transmission of the Buddha's awakening into human history. For Mongolia, the arrival of these Relics carries exceptional meaning. Mongolia's Buddhist identity has historically been anchored in reverence, scholarship, monastic discipline, and meditative tradition. The presence of these holy relics establishes a sacred and tangible connection, completing the living picture of the Buddha Dhamma. Their presence in Mongolia is also an exceptionally rare and auspicious blessing for the Mongolian monastic community (Sangha).

The writer is Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India

Trust Didn't Collapse. It Fractured.

Global datasets reveal what's actually happening in views of health and science

Matthew Facciani

You may have heard that trust in science is collapsing. The evidence suggests something different: most people still trust scientists, but many no longer trust themselves to navigate a chaotic information environment and know whom to believe.

The Good News: Trust in Scientists is Holding
When we look at trust in scientists, we still see relatively high levels globally. Last year, I was part of a massive global study published in *Nature Human Behaviour*, a collaboration involving over 200 researchers across 68 countries and nearly 72,000 respondents.

The findings were, in some ways, encouraging. Trust in scientists globally remains moderate to high. No country showed low overall trust. About 78 percent of respondents believe scientists are well qualified, and 75 percent trust scientific methods as the best way to determine truth.

So any sweeping narrative of a global crisis of trust in science is not quite right. Most people, in most places, still believe in the enterprise of science. That is worth stating plainly, but it is not the whole story.

The Bad News: The Sources We Find Credible are Fracturing

The 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report on Trust and Health paints a more complicated picture. Across 16 countries and 16,000 respondents, confidence in people's own ability to navigate health information and make informed decisions dropped 10 points in a single year. That decline was significant in 14 of the 16 countries surveyed, and it cut across gender, income, education, and political orientation.

Trust in media to accurately report health information remains 11 points below where it stood before the COVID pandemic. Two in three people globally feel their country is fragmented over health issues. And this isn't abstract: 70 percent of respondents hold at least one of the six "divisive" health beliefs tested, including vaccine skepticism, fluoride fears, and claims about raw milk.

Importantly, the individuals holding these views are not disengaged or uninformed. They consume more health news, consult AI frequently, and seek out more sources than people who hold none of these beliefs. The problem is not ignorance or lack of information. It is an overwhelming and fragmented information environment that may be quietly eroding people's confidence in their own judgment.

What does this look like in practice? Around the same time these data were released, Katelyn Jetelina of *Your Local Epidemiologist* wrote something that made the picture feel especially immediate. Her piece on the hantavirus response focused on what happens when trust fractures and people have nowhere stable to land.

Jetelina argued that pandemic trauma, mistrust, weak leadership, and a fear-amplifying media environment combined to distort public perceptions of risk. While social media reflected spiraling anxiety, only 20 percent of survey respondents were actually concerned.



The Distinction That Matters

Here is what I think these two datasets, taken together, are telling us. There is a meaningful difference between trusting scientists in the abstract and trusting the information ecosystem in practice. Those are two separate things, and they appear to be moving in opposite directions.

People can believe scientists are competent, and most do, while still feeling uncertain about what to eat, whether to vaccinate their children, what AI is telling them, and whom to believe when credible-sounding sources conflict. The 68-country study and the Edelman report are measuring different constructs. One captures something closer to institutional legitimacy. The other captures something more like navigational confidence. And it is the second that is in trouble.

This connects directly to my own research on identity and misinformation. When people feel overwhelmed and uncertain, they do not become neutral information processors. They fall back on social identity as a navigation tool. Health beliefs become markers of who you are and whom you trust, not simply conclusions drawn from evidence. Edelman's 2026 research also found 70 percent of people globally are hesitant or unwilling to trust someone who differs from them in values, facts, or background.

That is how we arrive at a world where those divisive beliefs cut across education levels and political affiliations. When you cannot sort the evidence, you sort the messenger.

You can watch this happen with the CDC in the United States. Under the last administration, trust in the agency split along the usual partisan lines, with Democrats at around 70 percent and Republicans at around 51%. Now, with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. running the agency that sets

vaccine policy, Democratic trust has dropped nearly 10 points, and Republican trust has not risen to replace it. The result is an agency, unchanged in name and function, that fewer than half of Americans now trust. The lesson is not that one side has the CDC right. It is that trust in the institution was never only about the institution. It tracked who was in charge, and whether that person felt like one of us.

Where the Trust Actually Lives

Here is the thread that ties the hopeful findings together. Trust has not disappeared. It has relocated. It has moved away from distant institutions and toward the people we already know.

The Edelman report makes this concrete: the personal doctor remains the single most trusted voice, no matter how many divisive beliefs a person holds. New US data says the same thing. KFF's latest tracking poll finds doctors and health care providers far more trusted than government agencies, pharmaceutical companies, or food companies. Confidence in the person in the exam room is holding even as confidence in the institution erodes. Trust continues to be found hyper-locally, where relationships have been established.

The same pattern shows up in unexpected places. In the 68-country study, religiosity was positively associated with trust in scientists, and the link was strongest in Muslim-majority countries. That cuts against what many Western observers assume, and it points somewhere useful. Faith leaders are not obstacles to trust in science. In many communities, they are among its strongest carriers. The pastor, the imam, and the family doctor are not always competing with science. They can be channels through which science reaches people who would never read a journal or a press release.

And the population on the other end is more reachable

than the doom narrative suggests. Among people holding many divisive health beliefs from the Edelman data, 72 percent say they would accept a health recommendation that contradicts their current views if they heard it from trusted sources two or more times. Only 11 percent say they never would. KFF finds the same thing in what it calls the "malleable middle." On the myth that mRNA vaccines alter your DNA, only 3 percent are certain it is true. Most people are not locked in. They are waiting to hear something credible, more than once, from someone they trust.

The Path Forward Is Not Simply Showing Up

This is the part that is easy to get half right. Scientists do need to be present in digital spaces. When we are absent, the void does not stay empty. The loudest and most extreme voices fill it, and the algorithm rewards them for it. Presence is the price of entry.

But presence is not trust, and broadcasting more information into a saturated environment can deepen the fragmentation rather than fix it. The trusted messengers work because they are in a relationship with the people they serve. The doctor listens before prescribing. The pastor knows the family. The reciprocity is the critical factor, not the volume.

Which means the work is two-way. Earning trust is not a communications problem to be solved with better content and wider reach. It is built through dialogue, where scientists and institutions listen to communities, take their concerns seriously, partner with the people those communities already trust, and stay accountable when they get things wrong. We have spent years asking how to make people listen to us. The more useful question is how we show people that we are listening to them.

The Bigger Picture and Moving Forward

The question is not only whether people trust science, but whether they trust themselves, and the systems around them, to translate science into decisions that matter in their everyday lives.

I have written before about what rebuilding trust requires, and it is not better fact-checking or a viral campaign. It begins with warmth and humility in individual interactions. It grows through genuine community partnerships with the pastors, teachers, and local figures people already trust. And it requires institutional reform: greater transparency, accountability, and a willingness to admit mistakes. That framework feels more urgent with each new health crisis.

We have spent years asking whether people trust science. That was never quite the right question. Most people do trust scientists. What many have lost is confidence in their own ability to make sense of a chaotic information world and decide whom to believe. You do not restore that confidence by broadcasting more facts into the noise. You restore it the way it was lost: person by person, in the relationships where trust still lives.

Matthew Facciani, Ph.D., is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Notre Dame in the Computer Science and Engineering Department. Courtesy: *Psychology Today*

Saket building collapse: 6 dead; FIR registered, 2 MCD engineers suspended

PTI

New Delhi, May 31: Six people were killed and eight others injured in the collapse of a multi-storey commercial building housing a coaching centre, cafes and offices near Saket Metro Station in south Delhi, with emergency teams continuing search and rescue operations over 24 hours after the incident.

Police sources said most of the victims were preparing for competitive examinations, including the Foreign Medical Graduate (FMG) Examination.

"Five of those injured in the incident on Saturday at 7.40 pm passed away at AllMS, and another person died at Safdarjung Hospital," officials said, adding that five injured were undergoing treatment at AllMS, while three have been discharged.

An FIR has been registered under relevant sections, including culpable homicide, and teams have been constituted to investigate the circumstances that led to the collapse and arrest the owner of the building, an official said.

According to an order by the Deputy Commissioner of MCD's South Zone, Assistant Engineer (Building) Sudesh Singh Chouhan and Junior Engineer (Building) Aman Jain have been placed under suspension over alleged lapses in supervision related to the building that collapsed.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday visited the building collapse site and assured strict action against unauthorised constructions and the officers responsible for it.

The FIR has been lodged at Mehrauli police station, while the inquiry will be conducted under the supervision of the South District Magistrate on the chief minister's directions.

The incident occurred on Saturday evening on Westend Marg in the Saidulajab area when the "five-seven-storey" structure suddenly came crashing down. The building housed a coaching institute, cafes and



offices, while construction work was reportedly underway on its upper floor at the time of the collapse, the police said.

The area in Saket where the building collapsed is a hub of coaching for students seeking admissions in Medical and Engineering studies in foreign countries.

"Search and rescue operations are still in progress by NDRF, Delhi Fire Services, DDMA, Delhi Police, Delhi Civil Defence, and other ESFs. Heavy machinery, including Hydras, JCBs, and Rotavators, has been deployed at the site to expedite the rescue efforts," officials said Sunday evening, adding that efforts are underway to ascertain whether more people are trapped under the debris.

The deceased have been identified as Ravi (24), Kapil (28), Nalin Ray (23), Alok, Parvati (35) and Ekta (24).

Officials said the building was reduced to rubble, with a large portion of the debris falling onto an adjoining tin-shed canteen, owned by Parvati Ojha, a Nepal-born woman in her early 50s, frequented by students preparing for medical and engineering entrance examinations.

Among the injured are two medical graduates, two GATE aspirants, and an engineer.

Authorities have initiated a detailed inquiry to determine whether structural weaknesses, ongoing construction activity or any violation of building norms contributed to the tragedy. Police said further legal action would be taken based on the findings of the investigation.

Footage of the incident also surfaced on social media platforms, showing that moments before the collapse, a student began recording after noticing stones and bricks falling onto the road. Within seconds, the entire building came crashing down, sending up a massive cloud of dust that engulfed the area and triggered panic among people nearby.

According to the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) statement, an emergency call regarding the building collapse was received at the Emergency Operation Centre at 7.40 pm on Saturday. "A Quick Response Vehicle was immediately dispatched to the site and rescue operations were launched in accordance with standard operating procedures," the statement read.

Upon reaching the spot, authorities found that the building, spread across approximately 300-400 square yards, had completely collapsed. Residents

informed rescue personnel that around 10 to 15 people were feared trapped beneath the debris.

The injured were identified as Kshitij Pratap (25), Neelam Yadav (25), Anuj Dixit (22), Tarun (25), Saika Khan (27), Aastha (26), Aditya Sharma (24) and Vishal (25). All of them were shifted to the AllMS Trauma Centre for treatment.

Recalling the terrifying moments, an eyewitness of the incident said that there was a loud sound and the entire area turned into a dust ball.

"One moment, students were eating dinner, revising notes and discussing upcoming exams; the next, they were running for their lives as a deafening roar tore through the evening and a thick cloud of dust engulfed the area," an eyewitness told PTI.

Among those who lost their lives was 28-year-old Kapil, an aspirant for the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), who had gathered with five friends at the canteen adjacent to the building after performing well in an interview for a position at the coveted institution, his friends told PTI. The results are expected in July.

Kapil and his friend Nalin, both former students of Muzaffarpur Institute of

Technology (MIT) in Bihar and later associated with a coaching institute in Delhi, were among a group of six students, including two women, who had assembled for the meagre celebration.

Nalin Ray, 23, a resident of Nawada district in Bihar, had recently completed his B.Tech and was preparing for GATE. Family members said he was planning to return home during his upcoming break and had spoken normally with them earlier in the day.

Ramesh Chand received the crushing news of his daughter's death after waiting for hours near the debris.

A resident of Rajasthan's Alwar, Chand said he rushed to Delhi overnight after receiving a call from students who knew his 24-year-old daughter, informing him that she could not be contacted following Saturday's collapse.

The daughter, Ekta, a Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) graduate, had been living in Delhi for the past year while preparing for the Foreign Medical Graduate Examination (FMGE), scheduled to be held on June 28.

Just weeks before her 25th birthday on June 25 and days ahead of the crucial examination, she had appeared for a test on Saturday morning which, according to her family, had gone well.

"Her exam had gone well, and she was very happy. She spoke to family members twice in the afternoon, and everyone at home was celebrating her performance," Chand told PTI.

The day after the tragic incident, many aspirants described scenes of panic, dust, and devastation that disrupted months of intense preparation.

Located near Saket Metro Station, the Said-ul-Ajaib area is dotted with libraries, coaching institutes, hostels, and eateries that cater to hundreds of students, including Foreign Medical Graduate (FMG) aspirants and candidates preparing for examinations such as NEET, GATE and other competitive tests.

Lok Adalats, DLSAs have no authority to grant divorce: Allahabad HC



PTI

Lucknow, May 31: In a significant ruling, the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court recently held that Lok Adalats and district legal services authorities have no jurisdiction to grant divorce decrees.

The court, in an order passed on April 30, said the power to dissolve a marriage rests exclusively with family courts, while the authority of Lok Adalats is limited to facilitating settlements between parties, and it cannot render judicial decisions.

A division bench comprising Justice Shekhar B Saraf and Justice A K Chaudhary passed the verdict on a petition by a woman challenging an order by District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Unnao in 2018.

Her husband, she alleged, had treated the settlement recorded by the DLSA as a decree of divorce and relied on it as the basis for remarriage.

The court observed that under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, and the National Legal Services Authority (Lok Adalat) Regulations, 2009, matrimonial disputes involving divorce cannot be referred to Lok Adalats for adjudication.

It emphasised that the role of a Lok Adalat is confined to promoting amicable settlement

between parties and not to deciding disputes judicially.

Expressing concern over the proceedings conducted by DLSA, Unnao, the bench noted that when the law itself prohibits Lok Adalats from granting divorce, passing such orders amounts to an overreach of jurisdiction.

The court held that a clause in the settlement stating that both parties were free to remarry was legally untenable and void.

The bench clarified that no valid decree of divorce had ever been passed by a competent court in the matter. Therefore, the husband's reliance on the settlement as proof of divorce could not be recognised in law.

While disposing of the petition, the high court granted the petitioner liberty to pursue appropriate remedies in accordance with law.

It also directed that a copy of the judgment be circulated to all Lok Adalats and district legal services authorities across the state for future guidance and compliance.

The court observed that Lok Adalats are an important mechanism for ensuring speedy and accessible justice, but they must operate within the limits of their statutory authority and refrain from encroaching upon areas reserved for regular courts.

Police seize L&T machine, tipper for illegal mining in Pulwama

KT News Desk

Srinagar, May 31: Continuing its sustained drive against illegal mining and unauthorised extraction of minerals, J&K Police in Pulwama registered a case regarding illegal excavation at Puchal near Dairy Farm, seizing an L&T machine and a tipper involved in the activity.

Acting on reliable information, Police Station Pulwama received inputs that an L&T machine was being used for unauthorised excavation, causing damage to government land. The excavated material was being loaded into a tipper and transported without any lawful authority or permission, a police spokesperson said.

Acting promptly, a police party reached the spot and seized both the L&T machine and the tipper involved in the illegal activity.

Accordingly, Case FIR No. 103/2026 under Section 303(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Section 3 of the PPD Act has been registered, and an investigation has been set into motion.

Police remains committed to taking strict action against illegal mining and damage to public property and appealed to the general public to share information regarding such unlawful activities.

IMD says heatwave subsided; rain cools down several states

PTI

New Delhi, May 31: Overcast skies, along with sporadic rainfall, prevailed in several states on Sunday, keeping the mercury subdued in most parts, as the IMD said heatwave conditions have abated in the country.

The national capital witnessed a drastic fall in temperatures, with weather experts attributing the cooler conditions to rain and thunderstorm activity associated with an ongoing western disturbance over Rajasthan and central Pakistan.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast moderate to severe thunderstorm activity with squally wind speed of up to 90 kmph over northwest, central and adjoining east India. It also said the northwest monsoon may advance into parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu over the next three-four days.

Meanwhile, heavy downpour and adverse weather conditions triggered disruptions across Uttarakhand, leading to the temporary suspension of the Kedarnath Yatra and leaving hundreds of pilgrims stranded. The restriction was lifted later in the day as rains ceased and weather conditions improved.

Additionally, a major tragedy was averted at the Sri Reetha Sahib Gurdwara in Champawat district after the rescue of more than 50 pilgrims who were trapped in a swollen river during the

annual Jod Mela, officials said.

Maximum temperatures across both the plains and hills of Uttarakhand remained markedly below normal over Saturday and Sunday. In Dehradun, the maximum and minimum temperatures recorded were 26.6 degrees Celsius and 17.0 degrees Celsius, which were nine and five degrees below normal, respectively.

According to the IMD, high-altitude areas of the state located at 3,800 metres and above are likely to receive snowfall. The weather office has issued a yellow 'watch' warning, alerting residents about potential atmospheric disruptions, including risk of thunderstorms accompanied by lightning, gusty winds reaching speeds of 40 to 50 kmph, and intense to very intense spells of rain.

A dust storm swept through parts of Rajasthan for the second day, leading to a drop in temperature.

A thick cloud of dust was seen rising on the horizon in the Jaisalmer district before moving towards inhabited areas, reducing visibility and intensifying wind conditions. However, no damage or casualty was reported.

Light to moderate rainfall was also recorded in the state in some areas. The highest maximum temperature was recorded at 42.6 degrees Celsius in Phalodi, while the lowest was at 18.2 degrees Celsius in Sirohi, the weather department said.

Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 35.8 degrees Celsius, 4.2 degrees below normal, with most of its stations seeing temperatures lower than the seasonal average.

The IMD announced a yellow alert with a forecast of generally cloudy skies with light rain or thunderstorms at a few places in the city. The minimum temperature is expected to settle at 25 degrees and the maximum at 36 degrees on Monday.

However, temperatures are expected to gradually rise from Monday as the current spell of rain activity weakens and moves away from the region, the experts said.

In Himachal Pradesh, several parts received light to moderate rainfall over Saturday and Sunday, with Naina Devi recording the highest rainfall at 46.4 mm.

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning were reported from Shimla, Jubberhatti, Sundernagar, Kangra, Jot and Murari Devi.

Kukumseri was the coldest place in the state with a minimum temperature of 3.8 degrees Celsius, while Una recorded the highest maximum temperature at 33.4 degrees Celsius.

A day after rain lashed several parts of Haryana and Punjab, maximum temperatures hovered much below the normal limits in the two states, including their common capital Chandigarh.

According to the

meteorological department here, Chandigarh recorded a maximum of 32 degrees Celsius, over seven notches below normal limits.

In Uttar Pradesh, the state capital, Lucknow received 2.4 mm of rainfall, and the maximum temperature was recorded at 36.3 degrees Celsius, 3.9 degrees below the normal seasonal average, the meteorological department said.

Lucknow's minimum temperature stood at 24.7 degrees Celsius.

Significant rainfall was also recorded in Ballia (34.4 mm) and Moradabad (21.8 mm), among other places.

Thunderstorm/lightning accompanied by gusty winds is very likely at isolated places over western Uttar Pradesh and eastern Uttar Pradesh, the meteorological department said.

Meanwhile, most places in Jammu and Kashmir are witnessing normal weather conditions, with Srinagar recording a maximum temperature of 28.4 degrees Celsius, the met office said on Sunday.

Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, witnessed day temperatures higher by around 2.4 degrees.

The IMD has forecast isolated showers at some places over the next 72 hours in Jammu and Kashmir, with fairly widespread rains expected to lash the Union territory on June 4.

CID CI District Doda bids farewell to ASI Mohd Sikandar Butt on superannuation



KT News Desk

Doda, May 31: A warm and heartfelt farewell was accorded to Mohd Sikandar Butt, Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI), on his retirement from CID CI District Doda after rendering more than 36 years of dedicated and distinguished service in the department.

A farewell function was organized at District Police Lines (DPL) Doda, where officials and staff of CID CI District Doda gathered to honor the retiring ASI and acknowledge his invaluable contributions to the organization.

Family members, friends and colleagues were also present on the occasion.

Speakers at the function lauded Mohd Sikandar Butt for his sincerity, professionalism, commitment to duty and

exemplary conduct throughout his long and successful career. They highlighted his dedication and service to the department, which earned him the respect and admiration of his colleagues.

On behalf of the CID department, officials and staff extended their heartfelt gratitude and best wishes to the retiring ASI for a healthy, happy and prosperous post-retirement life.

As a mark of respect and appreciation for his exemplary service, a special gift was presented to Mohammad Sikandar Butt by the CID department during the farewell ceremony.

Expressing his gratitude, Mohammad Sikandar Butt thanked the department and his colleagues for their unwavering support and cooperation throughout his service career.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Governance likely

alleged that the same minister had even threatened to have him expelled from the party after he approached him regarding a development project.

Repeated attempts to seek comments on either the agenda of the June 3 meeting or the allegations against the minister proved futile, as NC leaders claimed that they are unaware

about them. (KNO)

PM Modi urges

of Uttar Pradesh and Langra of Kashi. There are mangoes from Bihar, whose aroma can be smelt from far. Chausa, Malda - memories of people are tied to every name," he said.

The prime minister said if someone goes to South India, people will find other varieties like

Banganapalli, Totapuri, Neelam, Malgova; there is Himsagar in Bengal; Suvarnarekha of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.

"In other words, the place changes, and so does the mango's form, colour, and taste... This journey of the mango is now reaching from villages to the global market," he said.

'Omar Abdullah

councillor, he still wouldn't resign from that position," Sharma said. He added that there is no question of resignation from a family he described as "power-hungry," alleging that they "got 50,000 Kashmiris killed for their chair."

"They (NC) are saying they are ready to settle for J&K's position lower than UT status, provided there is no reduction in their cavalcade of 12 vehicles or protocol," Sharma said.

The Leader of Opposition further accused the NC and PDP of running a "so-called movement" to keep "incompetent princes and princesses of two families" in power. "They bled Jammu & Kashmir for 36 hours to save their chairs," he said. On the CM's upcoming meeting with MLAs, Sharma claimed that Omar Abdullah is attempting to ensure that infighting within the party does not spill into the public domain. (KNO)

V-P warns youth may follow 'cockroach' if positive news is ignored

PTI

Kottayam (Kerala), May 31: Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Sunday said youngsters would end up following the "cockroach," in a veiled reference to the BJP, if positive activities and achievements were not reported adequately.

He stressed that constructive journalism is essential to guide society and strengthen public confidence.

Speaking as the chief guest at the celebrations marking the 140th anniversary of the Malayalam daily Deepika, Radhakrishnan said positive developments should receive greater attention in the media so that young people are exposed to the right information and role models.

"Positive activities should be reported well. Only then will youngsters receive the right information. Otherwise, they will lose interest and end up following the 'cockroach,'" he said.

The vice president said that as India marches forward with confidence and aspiration under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the role of responsible media institutions becomes even more significant.

"We want to be the most developed nation by 2047. That cannot be achieved without the



contribution of every section of society," he said.

Radhakrishnan said he was not against freedom of expression but questioned the tendency to give disproportionate attention to issues that may not stand the test of time.

Apparently referring to the buzz generated by the Cockroach Janata Party (a satirical social media account), particularly among youngsters, he questioned whether something truly deserved so much attention in a single day.

"If something is genuinely good, people will continue to recognise its value after a week, 10 days, or even a

month," he said.

"Nobody knows about them. All of a sudden, they are everywhere. That cannot last," Radhakrishnan added, while stressing that noble ideas and positive messages should reach every nook and corner of society and contribute to nation-building.

The satirical platform emerged recently following a controversy around remarks attributed to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant regarding "cockroaches" and "parasites" during a court hearing on the "senior" designation of lawyers.

The CJI later clarified that his observations, directed at individuals entering the legal profession through "fake and bogus degrees," were misquoted. What began as an online satire project has since evolved into a wider conversation on digital dissent and youth frustration, with the platform using memes and sharp political commentary to address issues such as unemployment, exam paper leaks, and education.

The vice president said that the nation's development is not the duty of one single individual, one single party, or one single government.

"It is the primary duty of every citizen of this country. So we should not see politics in everything; we should see development in everything. Journalism can play the most important role," he said.

Radhakrishnan emphasised that constructive journalism helps build confidence in society, encourages collective responsibility, and motivates citizens to contribute to national development.

By highlighting compassion, scientific progress, community service, environmental protection, and human achievement, newspapers can become powerful instruments of social change, he said. He stated that the true dharma of journalism lies in

appreciating good work while fearlessly criticising wrongdoing whenever necessary.

The vice president said that editorials are the legitimate space for opinion in newspapers, while news reporting must remain objective and factual.

He cautioned against the growing tendency to editorialise news reporting.

Expressing concern over the changing media landscape, the vice president pointed to the growing challenge of misinformation, declining public trust, commercial pressures, and the rapid transformation brought by digital platforms.

He observed that people today are increasingly influenced by captions and headlines without engaging deeply with issues and debates. Radhakrishnan also praised Deepika for promoting social harmony, spreading education, preserving cultural roots, and encouraging constructive public discourse.

Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, Chief Minister V D Satheesan, Speaker of the Kerala Assembly Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan, former Governor of West Bengal C V Ananda Bose, and Archbishop of Kottayam Mathew Moolakkatt were among those present on the occasion.

Outcome being questioned when one loses election: Bengal governor



PTI

Kolkata, May 31: Bengal Governor R N Ravi on Sunday said that questions are being raised about the outcome of elections when someone loses.

The governor said that while it is understandable that outsiders would make such attempts, some entities within the country are questioning the credibility of constitutional institutions.

"When a judgment does not go in someone's favour, they say the court is compromised," Ravi said while addressing a programme in this north Bengal city.

"It is fine when one wins the election, but if they lose, they claim votes were looted," the governor said, without naming anyone or any political party. "This is an attempt to spread

confusion and break the country's confidence," he said.

The governor asserted that enemies within are working in concert with external enemies in such attempts.

"Attempts are being made to destroy our self-confidence not only by outsiders but also by our own people," he said.

In the recently concluded assembly election in West Bengal, the BJP defeated the Trinamool Congress to form the saffron party's first government in the state.

After the election result was declared by the Election Commission of India, TMC chief Mamata Banerjee refused to tender her resignation as the chief minister, alleging that the Bengal assembly poll verdict was "not a people's mandate but a conspiracy".

Domestic air traffic falls nearly 4 pc to 1.38 crore in April



PTI

New Delhi, May 31: Domestic air traffic declined 4.2 per cent to little over 1.38 crore in April compared to March amid multiple headwinds, including relatively softer travel demand.

The latest data from aviation watchdog DGCA showed that carriers flew more than 1.38 crore passengers in April, 3.47 per cent lower than over 1.43 crore passengers carried in April last year.

The decline is 4.2 per cent compared to the traffic of 1.44 crore passengers recorded in March.

"Passengers carried by domestic airlines during January - April 2026 were 575.49 lakhs as against 575.13 lakhs during the corresponding period of the previous year thereby registering an annual growth of 0.06 per cent and monthly growth of -3.47 per cent," DGCA said in its report for the month of April.

Airlines have been facing multiple headwinds, including rising operational costs due to higher fuel prices and relatively slower demand.

Amid the challenging scenario, carriers have also temporarily trimmed their network.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) data showed that IndiGo's market share rose to 65 per cent in April from 63.3 per cent in March while that of Air India Group fell to 24.7 per cent from 26.2 per cent.

The market share of Akasa Air

inched up to 5.8 per cent last from 5.4 per cent in March and that of SpiceJet declined to 3.4 per cent from 3.8 per cent during the same period.

In April, state-owned Alliance Air's share shrunk to 0.3 per cent from 0.6 per cent in March.

A total of 3,266 passenger-related complaints were received by scheduled domestic airlines in April and the number of complaints per 10,000 passengers carried for the month stood at 2.36, as per DGCA.

In terms of On-Time Performance (OTP) in April, IndiGo topped the list at 88.5 per cent, followed by Air India Group (82.4 per cent), Akasa Air (81.4 per cent), Alliance Air (71.2 per cent) and SpiceJet (31.2 per cent).

OTP is computed for ten major airports -- Bangalore, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Cochin, Guwahati and Lucknow.

Last month, around 1.12 per cent of the flights were delayed by more than two hours.

According to DGCA data, over 1.35 lakh passengers were affected by flight delays and airlines shelled out little over Rs 2.41 crore towards facilitation whereas 77,065 passengers were impacted by flight cancellations and in this regard, carriers paid Rs 2.04 crore towards compensation and facilities.

A total of 641 passengers were denied boarding and the airlines shelled out Rs 57.65 lakh for compensation and facilities.

Administrators not above criticism, says Kerala CM

PTI

Kottayam (Kerala), May 31: Kerala Chief Minister V D Satheesan on Sunday said that those in positions of power, including himself, are not beyond criticism and that constructive criticism is essential for the progress of society. Speaking at the 140th anniversary celebrations of Malayalam daily 'Deepika' here, Satheesan said criticism aimed at the progress and welfare of the state should be

welcomed.

"The beauty of democracy lies in the freedom of people to express their opinions. Therefore, press freedom must be protected," he said. The chief minister noted that various reports indicate a decline in media freedom in the country and stressed the need to safeguard independent journalism.

He said governments and public institutions should be willing to correct themselves when shortcomings are pointed out.

Himanta calls on Rajnath, Jaishankar; seeks guidance for Assam's progress



PTI

Guwahati, May 31: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday met Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in Delhi, and discussed ways to make the state a leading player in the defence ecosystem and boost trade and tourism with the neighbouring countries.

Sarma, during his meeting with Singh, also thanked him for participating in the Assembly election campaign in the state. "It is always enriching to meet Raksha Mantri Adarniya @rajnathsingh ji. He

is a powerhouse of wisdom and knowledge. We have so much to learn from his vast experience as an excellent administrator, a dedicated public servant and a veteran karyakarta," the CM said in a post on X.

"During my meeting today, I thanked him for his impactful campaign run during Assam Elections and sought his blessings and guidance to position Assam as a major player in the defence scheme of things in the days ahead," Sarma added.

The chief minister's office (CMO), also in a social media post, added that Sarma and Singh "discussed opportunities to strengthen Assam's role in the nation's defence ecosystem".

Posting about his meeting with Jaishankar on the micro-blogging site, Sarma said, "This morning, I had the pleasure to call on Hon'ble External Affairs Minister, @DrJaishankar ji. His perspective on global affairs and how India is navigating current geopolitical headwinds is always enlightening."

"I thanked him for sharing his insights on further strengthening Bharat's Act East Policy. We look forward to his guidance on how Assam can play a role in strengthening trade and tourism ties with neighbouring countries," he added.

Chennai, May 31 (PTI) Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay will visit Tiruchirappalli on June 1 to thank the voters of Tiruchirappalli East Assembly constituency from where he won and subsequently resigned his seat, party sources said on Sunday.

TVK president Vijay had successfully contested from both Tiruchirappalli East and Perambur (Chennai) Assembly constituencies in the recently held Assembly elections.

In Tiruchirappalli East, he won with a comfortable margin of 27,416 votes against his nearest DMK rival S Inigo Irudayaraj.

He also defeated DMK candidate RD Shekar in the Perambur constituency by a margin of 53,715 votes. However, Vijay opted to resign the Tiruchirappalli seat to retain Perambur.

TVK sources said Vijay is scheduled to leave from

Chennai in a chartered flight and reach Tiruchirappalli by around 4 pm.

He will take part in a "thanksgiving meeting" at St Joseph's college there.

The CM is also expected to interact with TVK cadres during a meeting besides reviewing the development of ongoing projects in Tiruchirappalli.

Vijay's visit is also a part of an ongoing exercise within the party where all TVK

MLAs were instructed to visit their respective constituencies to thank the voters.

Meanwhile, at a press conference in Tiruchirappalli, Assembly Deputy Speaker M Ravi Shankar and TVK leader Ku Pa Krishnan said that preparations were in full swing anticipating a larger crowd.

Ravi Shankar requested mediapersons to address the chief minister strictly as "CM" or "Chief Minister

Adhikari announces cabinet expansion



PTI

Kolkata, May 31: Bengal chief minister Suwendu Adhikari announced that 35 ministers will be sworn in on Monday as part of the expansion of his cabinet.

Adhikari said Governor RN Ravi will administer the oath at 11 am at the Lok Bhavan.

"Tomorrow, a full-fledged Council of Ministers of the nationalist government elected by the people of West Bengal will be constituted," he said in a social media post on Sunday evening. "As part of the cabinet

expansion, 35 ministers of the Government of West Bengal will take oath at Lok Bhavan at 11 am. Hon'ble Governor Shri RN Ravi will administer the oath of office to them at Lok Bhavan," he added.

Adhikari took oath as the chief minister on May 9 after the BJP swept the assembly elections, ending the 15-year rule of the TMC.

Along with Adhikari, four ministers took the oath that day. They were Agnimitra Paul, Nisith Pramanik, Ashok Kirtania and Kshudiram Tudu.

CM Vijay to visit Tiruchirappalli today to thank voters

PTI



Chennai in a chartered flight and reach Tiruchirappalli by around 4 pm. He will take part in a "thanksgiving meeting" at St Joseph's college there. The CM is also expected to interact with TVK cadres during a meeting besides reviewing the development of ongoing projects in Tiruchirappalli. Vijay's visit is also a part of an ongoing exercise within the party where all TVK

Vijay" to reflect his new constitutional designation and not as Vijay.

They also urged the TVK cadres not to follow the chief minister's convoy vehicles to prevent untoward incidents.

Police said elaborate arrangements are being made ahead of the CM's visit. Traffic diversions were made around the meeting venue, they added.

According to the organisers, a grand "pandal" (shelter) with red carpet has been set up in the meeting venue, which can accommodate more than 10,000 people, besides installing decorative lights and security barriers. A huge colourful arch with Vijay welcoming the people has been installed.

Several TVK party volunteers would be deployed at the venue to distribute drinking water and take care of the participants. In addition, ambulances will also be kept ready in and around the venue, they said.

CBSE admits security gaps after online marking portal hacked

PTI

New Delhi, May 31: The Central Board of Secondary Education on Sunday said vulnerabilities identified in the OnMark portal of its service provider have been contained and efforts are underway to rule out any other exploitable weaknesses.

"We have been closely monitoring the vulnerabilities in the OnMark portal of our service provider that are being flagged in the public domain," CBSE said in a statement posted on X. An expert team of cybersecurity professionals has been deployed over the last few days from across various arms of the government as well as the ITs to fortify these systems, including taking them over to a more secure set-up, the board said.

"The identified vulnerabilities have been contained, and other exploitable weaknesses are being ruled out," it said.

CBSE said it was grateful to alert citizens and ethical hackers who pointed out such weaknesses and had contacted some of them directly. "We are grateful to all alert citizens and ethical hackers pointing out such weaknesses, and have gotten in touch with some of them directly. We request any others to reach out to our security teams at secy-cbse@nic.in for any further inputs," the board said.

King Kohli finishes it in style: RCB are back-to-back IPL champions

PTI

Ahmedabad May 31: Virat Kohli lifted his arms aloft the moment he swatted Arshad Khan into the stands, sending the 900014 to a frenzy at the Narendra Modi Stadium. In seconds, he was engulfed by his teammates at the batting crease. Kohli, who broke away from the crowd to raise his bat and helmet to acknowledge the packed stadium that was chanting his name, had taken Royal Challengers Bengaluru to their second IPL title, beating Gujarat Titans.

Not long before in the innings, when Rashid Khan cleaned up Krunal Pandya, reducing RCB to 91/4 with a double-wicket over, GT had a glimmer of hope. But 156 was the kind of chase Kohli eats for breakfast. Or could do it in his sleep. However one wanted to put it, Gill and the lakh people at the stadium knew that this total and chase was right up his alley from the halfway mark.

Batting on 40 from 18 balls, till that point Kohli had just eight non-boundary runs. This was not the Kohli of the past and neither was RCB. The former captain, who played anchor for the first 15 years of his IPL career, has chosen to be aggressive and it paid off. But with 65 runs needed



from 66 balls, Kohli switched back to his old self. He knew as long as he stays in the middle, RCB are winning the title. And it was his chance to be there for the team and take it across the line in a big final for once. Over the next three overs, with Tim David by his side, Kohli ran hard — eight off his next 16 runs came by running between wickets. In the process, he also notched up his quickest IPL fifty (25 balls) in 19 years.

Once within reach, he tried to go over and was caught by Gill at mid-off only to be declared not out with the ball touching the grass. The writing was on the wall. After 18 years of trying to do this for

RCB, this was Kohli's moment of glory as he finished off in style.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru win IPL 2026: King Kohli finishes chase in style

Final: RCB fans make themselves feel at home in Ahmedabad ahead of summit clash

However, Kohli did not do it alone. He took RCB home, but the title defence and triumph was possible because of the much-revered bowling attack. From the moment Rajat Patidar won the toss and opted to bowl, the contest was down to one thing — whether or not Josh Hazlewood and Bhuvneshwar Kumar could run through the

top-heavy Titans. The latter, with 17 powerplay wickets, had led the way for RCB through the league stages. The Australian, who joined the party late, did not want to miss out on the big day.

Coming in during the third over, Hazlewood pulled the length back a little and got extra bounce to challenge Gill and B Sai Sudharsan on a two-paced pitch. And it worked. The first victim was Gill, who top-edged a back-of-length delivery, trying to go across the line. Soon, Kumar followed suit. Sai Sudharsan was caught in the crease to a bouncer and took the long walk back. That was perhaps the game, set, match and championship.

However, RCB were here for the kill. Rasikh Salam made a length ball climb to remove Nishant Sindhu. Krunal Pandya outsmarted Jos Buttler. When it felt like GT would not even get to 150, Washington came up with an unbeaten 50 off 37 balls to take them to a respectable total. That, however, was never going to be enough against Kohli who made the night his own. RCB are now two-time IPL champions.

Brief scores: GT 155/8 in 20 ovs (Washington 50 n.o., Nishant 20; Rasikh 3/27, Bhuvneshwar 2/29, Hazlewood 2/37) lost to RCB 161/5 in 18 ovs (Kohli 75 n.o., Iyer 32; Rashid 2/25).

Trump says US close to 'very good deal' with Iran, amid reports of changes to pact



PTI

Washington, May 31: President Donald Trump has said the US and Iran are close to a "very good deal," but if Washington does not get what it wants, then it will "end it in a different way."

Trump's remarks came during an interview to his daughter-in-law Lara Trump, which was telecast on Fox News on Saturday night.

"We're close to a very good deal. If you're going to be in a hurry, you're not going to make a good deal, and slowly but surely, we're getting what we want — and if we don't get what we want, we're going to end it a different way," Trump said. Trump said the

insisted that the US has "significant leverage" over Iran, as their navy and air force were "completely destroyed". However, he said, the US has not fully dismantled Iran's military because some of the leadership was more moderate.

Trump said the US had targeted Iran's more extreme elements and key leadership.

The US President held a meeting with his top cabinet colleagues and officers of the armed forces in the situation room on Friday but it concluded without any clarity on future actions.

US media outlet Axios reported that Trump asked for several amendments to the deal his envoys reached with their Iranian counterparts.

Trump wants the deal and expects to finalize it soon, but is keen to strengthen several points that are important to him — particularly around Iran's nuclear material, Axios reported quoting two US officials.

Trump's request has launched another round of back-and-forth between the parties that could last several days.

Iranians are "good negotiators," but argued that the United States now holds "all the cards" because Iran has been "militarily defeated."

"But we're close to a very good deal. If we can make it, good. Otherwise we just start up with the Department of War as we call it," the US President said.

Trump said the Iranians had stated they were not developing a nuclear weapon, but he countered by asking what if they bought one.

"I said, well what happens if you buy a nuclear weapon? So now it says we will not develop or in any way purchase a military weapon. That's a big difference," he said.

The American leader

WHO chief hails 5 Ebola recoveries as new treatment center opens in eastern Congo

AP

Bunia (Congo), May 31: Five patients have recovered from a rare type of Ebola, the head of the World Health Organization said Sunday during a visit to eastern Congo's Bunia, a city at the heart of an outbreak.

"Four people will be discharged today and there was one that was discharged the day before yesterday," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said during the opening of a new Ebola treatment center in Bunia, the provincial capital of Ituri.

"Of course, we're still working on vaccines and treatments but that doesn't mean that people cannot recover from Ebola," he added.

The WHO said Friday a patient had recovered from the Bundibugyo virus, the current kind of Ebola, which has no approved treatment or vaccine. It was the first documented recovery of a confirmed Bundibugyo patient during the current outbreak.

The health organization said latest official figures showed 906 suspected cases and 223 suspected deaths. Neighboring Uganda has confirmed nine cases and one death, the Ugandan Health Ministry said Friday.

The virus continues to spread faster than the response despite better-organized health facilities and new aid arrivals. Doctors Without Borders, or MSF, said Saturday, calling for the immediate expansion

of testing, faster deployment of aid workers and sustained access for medical supplies.

The dangers faced by health workers have been heightened by anger among residents over the stringent medical protocols for handling the victims' bodies, which clash with local burial rites. Residents have launched at least three attacks against health centers.

Tedros stressed the importance of involving the community in the outbreak response during the opening of the new treatment center on Sunday.

"If you come to health facilities when you have symptoms, you can get the support and recover, so the key is to come forward as early as possible and to get the necessary support," the WHO chief said.

"We can stop this Ebola and anyone who has it can also recover. But the rule ... is this thing is everybody's business and every citizen should be involved," he added.

Attacks in Ituri by the Allied Democratic Forces, a rebel group allied with the Daesh group, and a coalition of ethnic militias have also hindered the response.

The illness also has been reported in the Congolese provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, south of Ituri, where the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group controls many key cities, including Goma and Bukavu. The rebels have reported two cases.

Batters aren't able to read Bhuvneshwar as he bowls with wobbly seam: Tendulkar

PTI

Ahmedabad, May 31: The cricket geek in legendary Sachin Tendulkar is impressed by veteran seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar's strategy of bowling "straight lines with a wobbly seam" which has confused the best in the business no end during this year's Indian Premier League.



The 36-year-old Bhuvneshwar, who last played for India in 2022, is now second in the highest wicket-taker's list for the season with 26 scalps ahead of the final against Gujarat Titans. The wily Meerut man has troubled the best youngsters in the

business apart from keeping seasoned customers quiet in RCB's journey to the finals. "Bhuvneshwar Kumar has been really bowling well this season. Previous seasons, he would bowl a big outswinger, followed by a big inswinger. May be it was his conscious decision. But

this season he has been bowling as straight as possible," Tendulkar provided his observation on 'X'.

Tendulkar also analysed that batters aren't able to read his wrist position and trying to react to deliveries off the surface which has been their undoing.

New York Mayor Mamdani to skip annual parade celebrating Israel

AP

New York, May 31: New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani will not attend an annual parade honoring Israel on Sunday, breaking with a decades-long political custom because of his support of Palestinian rights.

Though it has gone by different names over the years, the Israel Day parade has always been a must-attend event for mayors, governors and other political leaders eager to win over the throngs of flag-waving



revelers who congregate on Fifth Avenue to celebrate the birth of the Jewish state in 1948. Not so for Mamdani. Two

weeks ago the mayor's office released a video commemorating the Nakba, an Arabic word for "catastrophe" that is used to describe the displacement of an estimated 700,000 Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that followed Israel's establishment.

"I said on the campaign trail that I wouldn't be attending the parade, and I've made my views on the Israeli government abundantly clear," Mamdani said at a news conference Thursday.

But he also promised a

robust police presence to make sure it went off "seamlessly and peacefully."

"While I will not be attending, our administration has been preparing for weeks to ensure the parade is safe for all those who take part," he said.

The city's police commissioner, Jessica Tisch, who is Jewish, told reporters she would attend.

"It is the mayor's decision not to march, and it is my decision to march proudly," she said as she stood alongside Mamdani at police headquarters.

Movies Schedule

Monday, 1st June

	BHOOTH BANGLA (U/A16+) Hindi - 11:45 AM, 03:00 PM	
	PATI PATNI AUR WOH DO (UA16+) Hindi - 04:30 PM	
	CHAND MERA DIL (U/A16+) HINDI - 10:55 AM, 01:45 PM, 07:00 PM	
	OBSESSION (A) ENGLISH - 11:30 AM, 02:15 PM	
	THE GREAT GRAND SUPERHERO ALIENS KA AAGMAN (U) HINDI - 06:15 PM	
	DHURANDHAR: THE REVENGE (A) HINDI - 05:00 PM	

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