



'Rishiwar' Inter-Faith Conference 2026

India respects unity in diversity: LG Sinha

'Honouring all faiths equally woven into India's philosophy for millennia'

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 04: Asserting that India has consistently emphasized unity in diversity and shown respect to every faith, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said that respecting all ideas and beliefs has always been tradition of Sanatan Dharma.

Addressing the 'Rishiwar' Inter-Faith Conference 2026 here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "The idea of honoring all faiths equally has been woven into fabric of India's philosophy for millennia."

"While many nations today struggle with challenge of co-existence, diversity has been our natural rhythm of life. While many societies have devised



and our thoughts united.

"Scholars and researchers worldwide agree that the spirit of equal regard for all religions finds its philosophical roots in the ancient traditions of our

Highlighting Jammu Kashmir's exceptional performance during the three phases of the Vande Mataram initiative, the Lieutenant Governor described the achievement as extraordinary and a testament to the people's enduring patriotic spirit.

The Lieutenant Governor also lauded the overwhelming public support for the Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir Abhiyaan. He said that participation from all sections of society has been organic and inspiring. He called upon citizens, institutions and community leaders to embrace the campaign as a people's movement and work together towards building a drug-free and healthier society.

Justice Sanjay Dhar, Judge, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, Dr. Syed | More on P6

'Rang-e-Kashmir Cultural Festival'

Preserving J&K's cultural heritage collective responsibility: LG Sinha

Says UT's culture, handicrafts reflect soul of India's ancient civilisation

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 04: Asserting that preserving J&K's cultural heritage is a collective responsibility, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said Union Territory's rich legacy, handicrafts and handloom traditions reflect the soul of India's ancient civilisation.

Addressing the 'Rang-e-Kashmir Cultural Festival' at Sher-e-Kashmir Park here, the Lieutenant Governor, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said, "A nation's true strength lies not only in its wealth or might, but also in richness of its spirit, depth of its traditions and the vitality of its culture. India is a land where knowledge blossomed, traditions endured, and culture remained the soul that bound its people together."

He welcomed artisans, craftsmen, buyers and visitors participating in the festival,



which began on May 30. "The event has provided a platform to showcase Kashmir's "anmol" (priceless) handloom and handicraft products. I hope that buyers visiting the festival would recognise and appreciate the artistic excellence of local craftsmen," he said, adding, "I believe Jammu and Kashmir is a land shaped

by centuries-old traditions, art and culture, which have always played a vital role in keeping society united."

He said the strength of any region does not come only from its physical capabilities, but from the richness of its soul and the depth of its traditions.

"Our country, India, is a great civilisation and | More on P6

Rains lash J&K parts

LG directs DC Reasi to provide relief to cloudburst-hit families

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 04: Rains lashed several parts of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, bringing relief from the recent spell of hot weather, while a cloudburst in Reasi district damaged several houses. However, no casualties were reported.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) in a post on X said: "Spoke with the DC Reasi to assess the situation following a cloudburst at Village Bathoi. While several houses suffered damage, fortunately, no casualties have been reported. I have directed the DC to immediately provide relief and assistance to the affected families."

Meanwhile, light to

moderate rainfall was reported from many areas across Kashmir and parts of Jammu. The showers brought daytime temperatures down in most parts of the Valley, making the weather pleasant for residents and tourists alike.

According to the Meteorological Centre here, one or two spells of rain, thundershowers, hailstorms and gusty winds are likely at most places across the Union Territory till Friday.

Brief intense showers are also expected at isolated places during the period, it said.

The weather office said conditions are likely to remain generally cloudy on Saturday, with brief showers at scattered places.

From June 7 onwards, weather is expected to remain generally hot | More on P6

Govt ensures young people become job creators: CM Omar

Hands over disbursement letters worth ₹1.12 crore to 6 beneficiaries under Mission YUVA

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 04: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday handed over disbursement letters to 6 beneficiaries worth 1.12 crore under Mission YUVA here at the Civil Secretariat.

Under Mission YUVA, 209 crore has been disbursed in 3,367 cases during April and May, showcasing government's focus on youth entrepreneurship and employment generation.

During the event, it was informed that out of a total of 5,016 sanctioned cases amounting to 269 crore, 209 crore covering 3,367



cases have been disbursed between April 1 and May 31. The programme was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary and Advisor to the Chief Minister

Nasir Aslam Wani. Senior officers present on the occasion included Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to the | More on P6

NC using statehood for political mileage: BJP MP

Waris Fayaz

Pattan, Jun 04: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Rajya Sabha MP Ghulam Ali Khatana on Thursday termed the National Conference's proposed protest for restoration of statehood to J&K as a "political stunt"

Speaking to reporters during his visit to Pattan village in North Kashmir, Khatana, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "The National Conference had relied on political theatrics during the Assembly election campaign and was now attempting to divert attention from what he described as its failure to fulfil promises made to the people."

"The National Conference

was high on dramas during the election campaign and made tall promises to the people. They cannot give statehood. It is the Centre that has to restore statehood and both the Prime Minister and Home Minister have already made their position clear on the issue," he said.

BJP MP alleged that the ruling party secured electoral support through political rhetoric but had failed to address key public concerns during its nearly two years in office.

"It has been close to two years and people are not happy with the promises made in the party's manifesto. The situation in education and healthcare sectors remains unsatisfactory," he said.

Khatana | More on P6

ICMR launches major cancer screening initiative in J&K, seeks research proposals

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jun 04: In a significant move aimed at strengthening cancer prevention and early detection in Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian Council of Medical Research has invited Expressions of Interest (EOI) from researchers and institutions across the Union Territory for a large-scale implementation research project on the prevention and screening of oral, breast, cervical and gastrointestinal cancers.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the initiative comes amid growing

concerns over the rising cancer burden in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in the Kashmir Valley, where gastric (stomach) and oesophageal cancers remain among the most commonly reported malignancies.

According to ICMR, more than 67,000 cancer cases were reported in J&K between 2018 and 2024, highlighting the urgent need for improved screening, early diagnosis and timely treatment.

The proposed four-year implementation research study will seek to develop an evidence-based and scalable model for cancer prevention and | More on P6

Ensure uninterrupted availability of life-saving medicines: Health Minister

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 04: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo on Thursday chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the performance and functioning of the Jammu & Kashmir Medical Supplies Corporation Limited.

During the review, the Minister undertook a detailed assessment of procurement mechanisms, inventory management, medicine distribution networks, quality assurance protocols, supply chain operations, vendor performance and ongoing procurement projects relating to



medicines, medical equipment and healthcare infrastructure.

Addressing the officers, Sakeena Itoo underscored the pivotal role played by JKMSCL in ensuring uninterrupted availability of quality medicines, surgical consumables, diagnostic supplies and medical equipment in government

healthcare institutions. She observed that a responsive and well-monitored supply system is fundamental to strengthening public healthcare services and improving patient outcomes.

She directed the officers to install procured equipment at designated | More on P6

Demand for 'alternate airport' gains pace as Sgr runway closure plan raises tourism concerns

Tourism players warn of major disruption during peak season | Seek Awantipora airport operations, additional direct train services

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 04: Tourism stakeholders in Kashmir on Thursday strongly pitched for an "alternate airport facility" in the Valley after Srinagar International Airport proposed a partial and complete runway closure for maintenance works later this year, saying the move could severely affect passengers and the tourism sector during the peak season.

As per the proposed plan issued by Srinagar Airport, the runway may remain

unavailable on every Monday and Tuesday from July 01 to September 30, 2026, while a complete shutdown of operations has also been proposed from October 01 to October 16 due to maintenance works being undertaken by the Indian Air Force.

The proposed restrictions are expected to impact more than 12,000 passengers who use Srinagar airport daily for arrival and departure flights during the busy tourism season.

According to the news



agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Srinagar

airport currently witnesses an average daily footfall of over

12,000 passengers, including tourists, business travellers, pilgrims and locals, making it one of the busiest airports in north India during the summer months.

Chairman of the J&K Hoteliers Club, Mushtaq Chaya said the Valley's tourism sector could face major losses if alternative arrangements are not made in advance.

"This decision will impact the entire tourism industry. Thousands of passengers travel through Srinagar airport every day, and any disruption during

peak season will directly affect tourism, hotels, transporters and other sectors linked with travel," Chaya told KNO.

He said tourism players have already raised the matter with Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

"We spoke to the Chief Minister, and he assured us that he will discuss the matter with the Prime Minister in Delhi. We are also going to meet Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and request him to ensure alternative arrangements," he said.

Chaya said stakeholders

want Awantipora airport to be explored as a temporary alternative for civilian flight operations during the closure period. "Till the maintenance work is completed, Awantipora airport should be considered for civilian use. Besides that, more direct train services from Delhi and other major cities should be introduced to reduce inconvenience for tourists and locals," he added.

President of the Travel Agents Association of Kashmir (TAAK), Rouf Trambo, said the tourism | More on P6

CS reviews impediments, steers measures to accelerate solarisation across J&K

'Undertake comprehensive review of land parcels identified on PM Gati Shakti Portal'

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JUNE 04: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, on Thursday, chaired a high-level meeting of all the concerned Government stakeholders to review the progress of large-scale solarization initiatives being undertaken in Jammu and Kashmir and to resolve the bottlenecks identified by the Science & Technology Department in advancing these efforts across the Union Territory.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Power Development Department; Additional Chief Secretary, Finance; Commissioner Secretary, Forest, Ecology & Environment Department; Divisional Commissioner, Jammu/Kashmir; Commissioner Secretary, Science & Technology Department; Managing Director, JPDCL/KPDCL, besides representatives of several other concerned departments.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary, as per an official statement, stressed the need for sustained and result-oriented follow-up by the Science & Technology Department on the issues deliberated upon,



observing that a clear roadmap for addressing the challenges had emerged through collective consultations with all stakeholders.

He underscored that the department should fully leverage the support being extended by the Finance Department and other agencies to achieve the solarization targets within defined timelines.

Emphasizing the immense potential of renewable energy in Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief Secretary advised the department to undertake a comprehensive review of the

land parcels identified on the PM Gati Shakti Portal and assess their suitability for establishment of mega solar parks under Government of India-supported programmes.

He called for a focused and mission-mode approach, directing the department to set measurable targets for the next six months, one year and two years, and ensure visible progress on the ground at each stage.

The meeting held detailed deliberations on a range of issues critical to the successful implementation of solar projects, including land acquisition

and transfer, obtaining statutory clearances from various departments, execution of Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with distribution companies for evacuation of power generated from solarized buildings, and measures required to maintain grid stability for optimal utilization of solar energy assets.

Discussions also centred on the installation of Virtual Net Metering systems in Government buildings, adoption of a Unified Billing System for departments in place of separate billing for individual buildings, and

provision of fresh power connections wherever required to facilitate seamless implementation of solar projects.

The stakeholders further deliberated upon the need for rationalization and levelization of rates for projects being implemented under the Renewable Energy Service Company (RESCO) model to ensure greater efficiency of solar energy solutions across departments.

The meeting also reviewed the long-term roadmap for development of mega-scale solar power infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir. Detailed discussions were held on issues relating to land transfer, execution of PPAs and feeder segregation, which are considered essential for efficient integration and utilization of future solar power assets in the Union Territory.

Reaffirming the Government's commitment towards clean and sustainable energy, the Chief Secretary called upon these departments to work in close coordination and expedite action on the decisions taken during the meeting so that Jammu and Kashmir catches up with other leading renewable energy developing regions of the country.

DC Kulgam reviews progress of NH-444, inspects Brazloo Bridge

KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, JUNE 04: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, Thursday visited the under-construction Brazloo Bridge on the NH-444 project and reviewed the progress of works being executed on the vital road corridor.



During the inspection, the DC was informed by the executing agency that the Brazloo Bridge is nearing completion, with most of the construction work already finished. He directed the concerned officials to expedite the remaining works and ensure their timely completion so that the bridge can be dedicated to the public at the earliest.

The DC emphasized the importance of the bridge in improving connectivity and facilitating smoother movement of commuters along the NH-444 corridor.

He also took stock of the overall progress achieved under the NH-444 project and reviewed the status of ongoing works at various stretches. The concerned officers briefed him about the pace of execution and the measures being taken to ensure completion of the project within the targeted timeframe.

The DC instructed all stakeholders to work in close coordination and remove any bottlenecks hindering progress so that the project is completed efficiently for the benefit of the people.

H&H launches carpet skill upgradation drive

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JUNE 4: As a major initiative to strengthen Kashmir's traditional carpet weaving sector and enhance artisans' skills, Department of Handicrafts & Handloom Kashmir, through its state-of-the-art Indian Institute of Carpet Technology (IICT), has launched a skill upgradation training programme under the Ministry of Textiles-sponsored SAMARTH Scheme.

SAMARTH (Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector) is a Flagship Ministry of Textiles initiative aimed at providing demand-driven and industry-oriented training to improve employability and promote sustainable livelihoods in the handicrafts sector. The programme is aligned with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), ensuring nationally recognized training and certification standards. In a press handout issued here on Thursday, a spokesperson, as per an official statement,



of the Handicrafts 7 Handloom Department stated that under the programme, 180 women beneficiaries from eight districts of Kashmir are scheduled to receive training in Silk Carpet Weaving on Modern Steel Carpet Looms over a period of two months. "Twenty trainees have been enrolled from 8 districts, while Srinagar, a major carpet weaving hub, will accommodate 40 trainees," the spokesperson said.

Speaking on the occasion, Zubair Ahmad, Director,

IICT, said that trainees maintaining at least 80 percent attendance will be eligible for a stipend of ₹5,000 per course, providing both skill enhancement as well as financial support. "The experienced Master Trainers engaged to impart specialized training under the programme will receive an honorarium of ₹20,000 per month, with a total training facilitation cost of approximately ₹3.60 lakh," he added. Highlighting the scheme's robust monitoring framework,

Director IICT further stated that the programme will undergo third-party audit and verification by auditors appointed by the Ministry of Textiles to assess compliance, training quality, attendance records and implementation outcomes. "To ensure transparency and effective monitoring, the programme incorporates an Aadhaar-based biometric attendance system" he added.

Department of Handicrafts & Handloom Kashmir continues to undertake focused interventions for the revival, preservation and promotion of the world-renowned Kashmir Carpet Craft. Through modernization of weaving infrastructure, skill upgradation, artisan welfare initiatives, market linkages, GI protection and capacity-building programmes such as SAMARTH, the Department remains committed to safeguarding this centuries-old heritage craft while creating sustainable livelihood opportunities, particularly for women artisans across the Valley.

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

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

NIT No.14/1855-64 of R&B/Vailoo/2026-2027/e-tendering DATED:04/06/2026

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory J&K e-tenders (In Single cover system) are invited on %age basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works.

S. No	Name of Work	Approved Amount (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. inform of Treasury Challan / Receipt (In Rs.)	Earnest Money (2% of Adv. Cost) (In Rs.)	Time of completion	Project Intending Department	Class of Contractor	Major Head of account
1	Construction of Community Bathroom at Harjaye Bidder near Masjid Shareef Sheikhul Alam ward no. 06	1.954	200	3908	30 Days	MC Kokernag	DEE Class	CDF
2	Construction of Drain FHO Bashir Ahmad Bhat upto HO Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat at Bidder ward No. 07	2.939	200	5878	30 Days	MC Kokernag	DEE Class	CDF
3	Construction of Drain NHO Habibullah Teeli S/O Mohd Ramzan Teeli at Bidder	0.799	200	1598	30 Days	MC Kokernag	DEE Class	CDF
4	Construction of Drain FHO Nisar Ahmad Shaksaz and others upto the house of Abid Ahmad Shaksaz and others at Bidder	4.717	200	9434	30 Days	MC Kokernag	DEE Class	CDF
5	Construction of R wall NLO Manoj Panditha and others at Bindoo Kokernag	4.185	200	8370	30 Days	MC Kokernag	DEE Class	CDF
6	Construction of Tile path FHO Haji Gh Ahmad Ganie to graveyard back side at Kokernag	1.467	200	2934	30 Days	MC Kokernag	DEE Class	CDF

Position of AA: Accorded

Position of TS: Accorded

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

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	04.06.2026		
2.	Period of Downloading of bidder documents.	From	04.06.2026	04.00 pm
3.	Bid submission Start Date	From	04.06.2026	04.00 pm
4.	Bid Submission End Date	To	10.06.2026	04.00 pm
5.	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	11.06.2026 at 10.00 A.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer R&B Division Vailoo		

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

- The 1st Lowest Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of allotted cost as performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR within 07 days before fixation of contract and shall be released after successful completion of defective liability period of the work.
- The EMD of 2% of successful bidders shall be released after receipt of 5% Performance Security.
- Only those contractors are eligible for taking part in the bidding process whose contractor registration card is enrolled online on the JKPWDOMS portal and the Proof of that needs to be uploaded with this bid mandatorily.
- The Advertised is cost is inclusive of GST@18%. The bidder has to quote the rate exclusive of GST.
- Security Deposit shall be deposited by the contractor within 10 days of issuance of LOI, failing which the concerned tender.
- The contractor shall initiate the work within 10 days of entering into the agreement, failing which the undersigned shall terminate the contract and issue a fresh tender after imposing penalties viz forfeit security/LD as per T&C of the Bid document and recommend contractor for blacklisting.
- The work shall be completed by the concerned contractor as per the timeline stipulated in the bid document/agreement, failing which action shall be initiated against contractor by forfeiting EMD and shall be recommended for blacklisting.
- The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer R&B Division vailoo (tender receiving authority).
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids
- The earnest money shall be forfeited, if-
 - Any bidder/ tenderer withdraws his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.
 - Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.
 - Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.
- Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.
 - Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in to acquaint bid submission process.
 - To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved Vendor.
 - The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No bid will be accepted in physical form.
 - Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-1.
 - Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copies of all necessary documents including earnest Money and tender document fee in terms of soft copies with technical bid

The Earnest money in favour of unsuccessful / Non-responsive bidders shall be released only after ensuring submission of Tender document Fee in original.

DIPK-1847/26
DATED: 04-06-2026

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

Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan: Central Kashmir Excise Range intensifies crackdown

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JUNE 04: Central Kashmir Excise Range intensified its crackdown against the illicit cultivation of Narcotic crops (Poppy) under the Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan and destroyed illegal poppy cultivation at multiple locations including Bugchil Khansahib, across the Srinagar-Budgam-Ganderbal Excise Range.

The drive, as per an official statement, was held in collaboration with Police, Revenue and Agriculture Department and the FIR was lodged under the relevant sections of NDPS Act at the concerned Police Stations. All legal formalities including seizure, Sampling and destruction were reportedly completed on spot. FIR no 106/2026 under relevant sections 8/18 of NDPS Act has been registered at police station Khansahib, investigation has been taken up.

This enforcement action exemplifies the commitment of the Excise Department to curbing illegal activities and upholding the rule of law under the supervision of the Excise Commissioner and the Deputy Excise Commissioner (Executive), Kashmir.

DC Budgam visits Markazi Imambara Yousuf Abad Bemina

Reviews on-site arrangements for upcoming month of Muharram-ul-Haram

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, JUNE 04: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan on Thursday visited Markazi Imambada Yousuf Abad, Bemina, to review the arrangements being put in place for the smooth observance of the ensuing holy month of Muharram-ul-Haram

During the visit, the DC, as per an official statement, inspected the facilities available at the Imambara and interacted with local residents, religious leaders, and members of the management committee to assess their requirements and concerns ahead of the month.

The local representatives projected several demands and issues which included repair and restoration of damaged stretches on the Mirgund Bemina Road, ensuring uninterrupted power supply with adequate backup arrangements, augmentation of potable water supply, strengthening of medical facilities, and development of a dedicated parking space at the Imambara to facilitate devotees and visitors.

During the visit the DC directed the concerned departments to take all necessary measures to ensure seamless arrangements during Muharram-ul-Haram.

He instructed the Roads & Buildings (R&B) Department to examine and address the damaged road stretches on priority.

He also emphasized the need for a



comprehensive traffic management plan to ensure the convenience of mourners.

The DC further directed the Power Development Department (PDD) to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply and adequate backup arrangements during religious gatherings.

He also instructed the Jal Shakti Department to maintain regular and sufficient water supply throughout the Muharram days.

Regarding healthcare services, the DC directed the Health Department to ensure the availability of medical teams, ambulances, and essential healthcare facilities during major congregations.

CM Omar meets multiple delegations

Discusses housing, urban infra, connectivity projects

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, June 04: Several public representatives, senior army officers, and civil officers on Thursday called on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at the Civil Secretariat and discussed key developmental and public welfare issues across Jammu and Kashmir.

During the day, MLAs Dr Rameshwar Singh (Bani) and Sajad Shaheen (Banihal) called on the Chief Minister and raised various constituency-related developmental and public welfare issues. The Chief Minister gave a patient hearing to the issues projected by the legislators and assured their appropriate consideration and follow-up action.

Chairman & Managing Director, HUDCO, New Delhi, Sanjay Kulshrestha also called on the Chief Minister. During the meeting, they discussed a wide range of housing and urban infrastructure projects, including the Urban



Challenge Fund (UCF), water supply, sewerage, drainage, road connectivity and power infrastructure, among other matters. Later, Lieutenant General Harpal Singh, Director General, Border Roads Organisation (BRO), called on the Chief Minister and apprised him of various ongoing Beacon projects and infrastructure works

being executed across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Chief Minister reviewed the progress of ongoing infrastructure initiatives and reiterated the government's commitment to strengthening development delivery and addressing public issues across all regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

Former DDC member, DCC President call on LG Sinha

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, June 04: Adv Ulfat Mushtaq, former Member, District Development Council Ramhall called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday.

Subsequently, Umer Jaan, President, District Congress Committee (DCC) Pulwama also called on the Lieutenant Governor.

BJP fields Tarun Chugh for Rajya Sabha from MP

KNO

Srinagar, Jun 04: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has announced its National General Secretary and J&K & Ladakh in-charge, Tarun Chugh, as a candidate for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections from Madhya Pradesh. The polls are scheduled for June 18, 2026.

Chugh has been nominated as BJP's candidate from Madhya Pradesh



where his win is certain

Born in Amritsar, Punjab, Chugh holds an MBA in Human Resources and began his political journey with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Over the years, he has emerged as a prominent figure in national politics.

He is credited with playing a crucial role in BJP's 29-seat tally in the 2024 J&K Assembly elections—(KNO)

Public welfare top priority of Govt: Sakeena Itoo

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, June 04: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo on Thursday presided over a Mega Public Outreach Programme at Banquet Hall here during which scores of public delegations, individuals and representatives of civil society organizations projected their grievances and developmental demands.

MLA Eidgah, Mubarak Gul; MLA Hazratbal, Salman Ali Sagar; MLA Lal Chowk, Sheikh Ahsan Pardesi; MLA Chanapora, Mushtaq Ahmad Guroo; Director School Education Kashmir, ADDC Srinagar, Director Colleges, other senior officers of district administration and large number of locals and public delegations were also present on the occasion.

Interacting extensively with the participants, Minister Sakeena Itoo patiently listened to their concerns and assured them that the Government remains fully committed to addressing genuine public issues in a prompt



and effective manner. "Public outreach programmes serve vital platforms for strengthening the connection between the administration and the people while ensuring that governance remains accessible and responsive to citizens needs", she stated.

The Minister directed the officers present to maintain a proactive approach in resolving public grievances and stressed the importance of ensuring timely disposal of complaints. She said that every grievance must be treated with

seriousness and sensitivity, adding that responsive governance is essential for building public confidence in Government institutions.

"Public welfare remains the foremost priority of the Government. Officers must ensure that issues brought before them are addressed within stipulated timelines and citizens do not face unnecessary delays in availing government services," she stated.

Sakeena Itoo further underscored the need for enhanced coordination among various

departments to facilitate swift resolution of public issues. She instructed the concerned officials to undertake regular field visits, monitor developmental works on the ground and maintain continuous engagement with the people to better understand and address their concerns.

During the programme, several delegations sought augmentation of healthcare services, upgradation of educational institutions, upgradation

Continued on

www.kashmirthunder.in

Statehood alone not enough, battle is for snatched rights: Irshad Kar



WARIS FAYAZ

Sopore, Jun 04: Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Sopore Irshad Rasool Kar on Thursday said the struggle of the National Conference (NC) goes beyond the restoration of statehood and is focused on reclaiming the constitutional rights that were "taken away" from the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Kar made the remarks a day after Chief Minister Omar Abdullah chaired a marathon meeting of NC MLAs and MPs at Dachigam that lasted for more than seven hours. The meeting reviewed the performance of the 19-month-old government and discussed governance, public issues and the party's future political course.

The MLA said every issue concerning Jammu and Kashmir was discussed in detail during the deliberations. "Everything was discussed minutely during the

meeting," he said.

Referring to the National Conference's proposed protest march to New Delhi during the upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament, he said the initiative should not be seen merely as a campaign for the restoration of statehood.

"It is not only statehood that matters. Statehood is a right, and it is meant for running a government in a state. But the Delhi Chalo protest march is for the fight for the constitutional rights that have been snatched from us," he said.

The Sopore legislator said statehood primarily relates to administrative powers, while the larger political objective remains the restoration of rights and safeguards that Jammu and Kashmir previously enjoyed.

"Statehood is only in between and for administrative power. The main fight is for the rights that have been snatched," Kar asserted—(KNO)

Devotees throng Hazratbal on Usman Gani (RA) Martyrdom anniversary

REHAN QAYOUM MIR

Srinagar, Jun 04: Thousands of devotees thronged the historic Hazratbal Shrine on Thursday to offer special prayers and have a glimpse of the holy relic on the occasion of the martyrdom anniversary of Hazrat Usman Gani (RA), the third Caliph of Islam.

The revered shrine witnessed a huge gathering of men, women and children from different parts of Kashmir who assembled since early morning to participate in the religious observances with devotion and reverence.

As part of the occasion, the holy relic was displayed to the devotees after the congregational prayers, drawing emotional scenes as people raised their hands in supplication and prayed for peace, prosperity and communal harmony.

Devotees said the occasion holds immense religious significance and provides spiritual solace to the people.

"We feel blessed to



witness the Holy Relic on this sacred occasion. People from every corner of the Valley come here to seek blessings and pray for peace," Mohammed Salam from Budgam said.

Rafiq Ahmed, another devotee, said the sacrifice of Hazrat Usman Gani (RA) continues to inspire the Muslim community towards unity, patience

and compassion. Authorities had put in place elaborate arrangements around the shrine to facilitate the smooth movement of devotees. Security personnel and volunteers were deployed, while traffic regulations were also enforced in the Hazratbal area to avoid congestion.

Religious scholars highlighted the

contribution and sacrifices of Hazrat Usman Gani (RA), remembering his role in strengthening the foundations of Islam and promoting justice and generosity.

The atmosphere around the shrine remained spiritually charged throughout the day as devotees continued to offer prayers and recite verses from the holy Quran—(KNO)

Ganderbal all set for LG's anti-drug Padyatra: DC Kishore

RAJA SYED RATHER

Ganderbal, Jun 04: The district administration Ganderbal has completed all preparations for the mega padyatra scheduled to be held tomorrow, June 5, which will be led by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha as part of the anti-drug awareness campaign.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore on Thursday reviewed the arrangements at Qamariya Stadium, the starting point of the padyatra, and expressed satisfaction over the preparedness for the event.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC said adequate seating arrangements and other necessary facilities have been put in place, while the venue has been suitably decorated to welcome participants.

He said the administration has received an encouraging response from the public and expressed confidence that the rally will witness massive participation and emerge as a grand success.

Appealing to the people of Ganderbal, Kishore urged citizens to participate in large numbers and celebrate the event like a festival. The DC called upon people, particularly the youth, to support and strengthen the anti-drug campaign launched by the Lieutenant Governor and contribute towards making the mission successful.

The mega padyatra is expected to witness participation from officials, students, youth groups, civil society members and residents from different parts of the district—(KNO)

Imported cherry varieties fetch premium prices in Kashmir

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Jun 04: Kashmir's cherry season continue to go on a promising note, with newly introduced imported varieties continuing to command premium prices in wholesale and retail markets across the Valley.

Although erratic weather conditions during the flowering stage have reduced overall production this year, growers and traders remain optimistic as strong market demand is ensuring attractive returns.

The early-ripening cherry cultivars, particularly those imported from Italy and Bulgaria, have already reached markets and are fetching significantly higher prices compared to previous years. Their arrival has



provided a boost to growers at a time when traditional cherry varieties are still nearing maturity and awaiting harvest.

Fruit trader Irfan Ahmad from the Fruit Mandi in Shopian said that despite lower production caused by adverse weather

during the flowering period, market rates have remained highly encouraging.

"Production has declined this year because of unfavorable weather conditions during flowering. However, the market is responding positively. On Thursday, cherries were sold at rates ranging between Rs 150 and Rs 300 per kilogram. As the season progresses and demand increases, prices are expected to rise further and may even cross Rs 500 per kilogram," he said.

The imported varieties have gained popularity among growers due to their ability to withstand light and moderate rainfall, a critical advantage in Kashmir's unpredictable weather conditions. Traditional cherry varieties are highly susceptible to

rain damage, which often affects fruit quality, appearance and market value.

Growers say the staggered ripening pattern of the imported cultivars is another major advantage. Unlike conventional varieties that mature almost simultaneously and flood markets within a short period, the newer cultivars ripen gradually, ensuring a more balanced supply and helping growers secure better prices over an extended period.

Basheer Ahmad Basheer, President of the Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers and Dealers Union, said the rates are going on good despite reduced output due to weather conditions and recent hailstorms were salts were salt on the wounds of growers.

Four houses gutted in Rainawari blaze

KNO

Srinagar, June 04: A massive fire broke out in the Kalwal Mohalla area of Rainawari in Srinagar on Thursday evening, damaging at least four residential houses and triggering panic in the densely populated locality. Officials said that the blaze erupted late in the evening, following which teams from the Fire and Emergency Services department and police rushed to the spot to launch rescue and firefighting operations.

According to officials, at least four houses were involved in the

incident, while efforts were underway to prevent the flames from spreading to adjacent structures in the congested neighborhood.

"Fire service personnel and police teams are actively engaged in dousing the flames. More details will be shared once the situation is brought under control," an official said.

Locals also joined the rescue efforts and were seen assisting authorities in evacuating residents and controlling the fire.

The cause of the fire was not immediately known, while no casualties had been reported at the time this report was filed—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

Friday Brief: The Real Test Begins After Hajj

The real test begins after Hajj. The pilgrimage is a profound spiritual reset. Millions return with their sins forgiven. The question is not how beautifully one performed the rituals, but how enduringly one lives the lessons learned. The Quran and Hadith make it clear: the true value of Hajj lies in the life that follows. Allah commands: "And complete the Hajj and Umrah for Allah" (2:196). "Complete" does not end with throwing pebbles or shaving the

head. It extends to a lifetime of obedience, patience, and gratitude. Hajj is a training ground. The pilgrim returns as a newborn, free of sins. But a newborn must grow and strive. The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said: "Whoever performs Hajj for the sake of Allah and does not commit any obscenity or transgression will return free of sins as on the day his mother gave birth to him" (Sahih al-Bukhari). This is the promise, but it carries a responsibility. The pilgrim must

protect that purity. A single sin after Hajj is more damaging than a hundred before it, because it betrays the purpose of the journey. Hajj teaches patience. The crowds, heat, and exhaustion train the pilgrim to control anger and be kind. After Hajj, this patience must remain. The pilgrim who yelled in Mina but yells at his wife after returning has wasted his journey. Hajj teaches humility. The white Ihram strips away pride of wealth and status. After Hajj,

this humility must stay. The pilgrim who looked down on others in Arafat but looks down on his servants after returning has lost the essence. The Quran warns: "And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves" (59:19). The post-Hajj period is dangerous. Routine returns. The spiritual high fades. Only the sincere pilgrim fights to keep the flame alive. The life after Hajj must be a life of increased prayer, honest dealings, kind speech, and

active charity. The pilgrim must become a walking reminder of Allah's mercy. Hajj is not a vacation. It is a contract with Allah. The best gratitude is obedience. The best obedience is consistency. To every Hajji: do not let your Hajj die with the last stone you threw. Carry its lessons home. Let your home become a sanctuary of peace, your tongue a fountain of truth, and your heart a fortress of faith. That is the Hajj that Allah accepts. That is the Hajj that lasts.

Great Nicobar: India's Maritime Strategic Fulcrum

A state that does not secure its frontiers, alliances and trade routes cannot secure its future: Kautilya

Admiral D. K. Joshi

Kautilya's lesson, written into the grammar of statecraft centuries ago, has returned with unusual force in our time. Nations today are again being tested not merely by the size of their economies or the strength of their armies, but by their ability to read geography, anticipate the future and act before opportunity turns into vulnerability. Great Nicobar is one such test for India.

It may appear as a distant island at the south-eastern edge of the Indian map, to be left untouched, as it largely has been for decades. Great Nicobar is India's forward maritime post. Located close to some of the most important seaways of the Indo-Pacific, it is one of India's most important strategic windows to the world. That is why the proposed development of Great Nicobar cannot be understood merely as an infrastructure project. It is not just about a port, an airport, a township or a power plant. It is a strategic test about whether India is prepared to convert a rare geographical advantage to further bolster its Comprehensive National Power.

For centuries, the Indian Ocean shaped India's destiny, carrying our trade, ideas, civilisational influence and, at times, our vulnerabilities. Yet, for much of the post-independence period, India's strategic imagination remained heavily continental.

It is undisputed that Great Nicobar occupies a position of exceptional strategic importance. It is one of the largest islands in the archipelago, with an area of about 910 sq. km. The total project area of 166.10 sq. km is only about 2 per cent of the total area, of which 130.75 sq. km, approximately 1.82 per cent of the total forest area of the Islands, is proposed for diversion.

It lies close to South-East Asia and sits near major global sea lanes, including the Malacca Strait, the Six Degree Channel, the Sunda Strait and the Lombok Strait. In the true strategic sense, it is India's eastern maritime outpost.

Its importance becomes clearer when it is viewed not from the strategic lens of the high seas. Imagine the ships moving from the Gulf of Aden towards the Malacca Strait, energy cargo sailing from West Asia and Africa towards East Asia, container traffic connecting Asia, Africa and Europe, naval assets, surveillance platforms and logistics chains moving through these waters.

The Indian Ocean is increasingly becoming a crowded strategic arena. Energy flows,



container traffic, naval deployments, island facilities, undersea cables and maritime surveillance are now part of a larger contest, invisible perhaps to many sitting on the mainland, but decisive for the future of nations.

A recent development is that a decades old proposal for a canal connecting Andaman Sea to the Gulf of Thailand has been shelved. Instead, an overland 90 km multi-modal land bridge connecting two newly designed deep-sea ports along the tenth parallel – one in Ranong on the Andaman Sea and another in Chumphon on the Gulf of Thailand, along with dual track high speed rail, multi lane road, energy pipelines for oil and gas and air-digital grid, is pending final approval. All these factors completely redefine the Indo-Pacific trade route and shift the economic centre of gravity directly into the Andaman basin.

The Strait of Malacca is among the world's most important chokepoints. It connects the

Indian Ocean with the Pacific and carries energy (oil and LNG) and commerce of enormous value. Great Nicobar's Galathea Bay is about 45 km from the Six Degree Channel, which connects the Malacca Strait with routes leading towards Africa, the Middle East and Europe. Around one lakh ships pass annually through the Malacca Strait-Six Degree Channel route. The island's proximity to the Malacca, Sunda and Lombok chokepoints gives India significant strategic advantage. No serious maritime power can afford to ignore such geographical facts.

Across the IOR, powerful countries are steadily expanding their presence through ports, logistics arrangements, maritime access facilities, naval assets, surveillance systems and economic corridors.

India's answer cannot be hesitation. It must be strategic consolidation. Sovereignty is not strengthened merely by drawing lines on a map. It is strengthened when territory

becomes connected, inhabited, serviced, productive and strategically usable. The International Container Transshipment Port, greenfield airport, township and power plant are not isolated projects. Together, they create the ecosystem needed for India to maintain a credible, sustained and multi-dimensional presence at a decisive maritime location.

The National Green Tribunal, after due diligence and liquidation of observations, acknowledged the project's great significance not only for economic development of the island and surrounding areas of strategic location, but also for defence and national security.

Singapore did not become a great maritime hub merely because it was well located. It built capacity around that location. Location gave it opportunity and its infrastructure converted that opportunity into influence. Diego Garcia offers another lesson from the Indian Ocean. It shows how

a remote island, when equipped with logistics and operational infrastructure, can acquire outsized strategic significance. The maritime build the necessary capacity to use geography.

Great Nicobar allows India to do this in a balanced and distinctly Indian way. It can support trade and strengthen national security, reduce dependence on foreign transshipment hubs, enhance India's maritime reach and can serve as a gateway to South-East Asia and a platform for the wider Indo-Pacific. A transshipment port at Great Nicobar can reduce dependence of India's transshipped cargo handled at foreign ports, improve supply-chain resilience, attract investment, generate employment and give India greater certainty over movement of its own cargo.

Of course, Great Nicobar is environmentally sensitive. Any project of this scale must be implemented with ecological care, legal compliance, scientific monitoring and genuine mitigation. Development cannot be careless. But ecological sensitivity cannot become a permanent veto on strategic thinking. The real challenge is not to choose between ecology and national security. The challenge is to pursue national security with ecological responsibility.

The real question is whether India wants to responsibly develop a strategic island, or whether it will leave that island unconnected at a time when the entire Indo-Pacific is being reorganised.

India is both a continental and maritime power. For too long, the continental mind overshadowed the maritime one. The Great Nicobar project is therefore not an extravagance, but a strategic foresight. A nation's destiny is shaped not only by the threats it faces, but by the opportunities it recognises in time. Great Nicobar is one such opportunity. To neglect it would be to leave geography unused and vulnerable to being shaped by others. To develop it wisely would be to turn geography into strength.

India does not need to apologise for thinking strategically. It only needs to act responsibly, decisively and with a clear sense of national interest. In the Indo-Pacific century, Great Nicobar is not the edge of India. It is India's watchtower at the gateway of the future.

The author is currently the Lt. Governor of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Vice Chairman of the Islands Development Agency. He is a former Chief of the Naval Staff and Commander-in-Chief of the A&N Command during 2009-10.

How Procrastination Holds Us Back

Procrastination is a familiar form of self-sabotage

LYBI MA

My father did not delay or torment himself with self-sabotaging behaviors. Procrastinating over an unenjoyable task would have been a luxury for him. My parents fled their homeland as refugees and were homeless for many years; my mainland Hui kin lived through periods of national strife, cultural reform, and rehabilitation camps. The hardships many people endure can put life into sharp perspective. When lives are at stake, why would I wallow in my miseries? After hardship, some may have a different view of what matters in life. In my father's case, the idea that people might sabotage themselves—through self-medicating, engaging in unhealthy eating, indulging in poor sleep hygiene, or any number of self-inflicted behaviors—probably seemed bewildering to him.

Yet, these types of problems are very real and nonetheless common. My Hui cousins refer to procrastination as an illness—the third character of procrastination



—tu yán zhèng, means disease. Delay has no cultural boundaries; it appears to be a pervasive problem.

Experts have studied procrastination as a familiar form of self-sabotage. Tim Pynchyl, a retired professor of psychology at Carleton University in Canada and the author of Solving the Procrastination Puzzle, studies

the art of putting things off and notes that this habit resides somewhere between one's intent and one's action, and bringing the two together is thorny for the person who tends to stall. According to Pynchyl, we are less responsible toward the self than we are toward others; most of us show up for a friend, more or less arriving at the agreed-upon time, yet a similar sense of responsibility is lost on the self. For instance, we intend to exercise at a designated hour, but instead roll over in bed and hit the snooze button.

As with other self-sabotaging behaviors, delay is often a problem of emotion regulation. Tasks that we put off and avoid come with emotional states such as anxiety, frustration, and resentment. We often run from our negative emotions. We don't know how to handle them, let alone know what to do with them. It's so much easier to close our eyes and wish the tasks away, but it's wiser to face them and the feelings that go along with them.

Our brains are pre-programmed to put off certain tasks automatically. Research

published in the Journal of Consumer Research found that we attend to urgent tasks that take less time (as in, The plant will die if I don't water it right now) and put aside important tasks that are more involved (as in, If I don't finish that project, I won't get promoted). Important tasks are often harder and take longer, whereas urgent tasks are often easier and give a feeling of reward when completed.

Therefore, we prefer to work on urgent tasks first, then turn to important tasks much later. Yet sometimes, later keeps getting pushed further into the future. According to psychologist Seth Gillihan from the University of Pennsylvania and the author of Mindful Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, "This tactic translates to Delay Transforms into Relief."

It's a reinforcement of the habit I call I Want to Avoid That Unenjoyable Task. It's self-defeating behavior to be sure, and it's the kind that guarantees failure. Sometimes it's easier to fail than to succeed because we want people to know that the task lacked our effort, not our ability. There are simple

actions we can take to combat a tendency to handicap ourselves:

Make a plan. Being uncertain or unsettled can increase self-sabotaging behaviors, but making a plan and setting realistic goals can counter this. I will forgo cake after dinner.

Start small. We tend to go big: I'm signing up for the marathon. However, we should start small: Today, I will do five push-ups. Tomorrow, I will do 10.

Know what we value. I want to live a healthy life. Our values guide the direction we are heading. Values shape personal identity.

Replace the habit. That cookie looks good. Instead of snacking on junk food, stock the fridge with healthy choices, like fruits and nuts.

References

Adapted from the book *How to Be Less Miserable*. Blackstone Publishing, 2025. Lybi Ma is the executive editor of *Psychology Today* and author of *How to Be Less Miserable*. Courtesy: *Psychology Today*

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

Javed Rana calls comprehensive measures to safeguard habitations, agricultural land from flood-related risks

Reviews development works in Baramulla Constituency

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 04: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, on Thursday directed the officers to expedite clearances, resolve pending issues and ensure timely completion of key developmental and public utility projects in Baramulla Assembly Constituency.

The directions, as per an official statement, were issued during a review meeting convened by the Minister at the Civil Secretariat to assess the status of ongoing development works and public welfare schemes in the constituency represented by MLA Javed Hassan Baig.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding afforestation and greening initiatives for Baramulla town, pending issues related to the Janbazpora-Kandikhan Irrigation Scheme and progress on the Sheeri Lift Irrigation Schemes under Phase-I and Phase-II.

The Minister directed the concerned officers to take all necessary measures for expeditious completion of works and early resolution of the pending issues.

Regarding the establishment of the City Forest at Azad Gunj, Baramulla, Javed Rana directed the concerned officers to actively pursue the proposal pending



with the Government of India. He emphasized the need for close coordination and regular follow-up with the concerned authorities so that the project is accorded due priority and taken up at the earliest.

The Minister said that the proposed City Forest would not only enhance the green cover in the area but also provide recreational spaces for the public while promoting environmental conservation and sustainable urban development.

The Minister directed the concerned officers to proactively address the pending forest-related issues, improve

access to essential services in tribal habitations and ensure effective implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) so that the rightful benefits envisaged under the Act reach tribal communities in a timely and transparent manner.

Regarding the Girls Hostel in Baramulla, the Minister directed to complete all the pending formalities related to its handover and takeover at the earliest.

The Minister also reviewed matters relating to the Sangri Top-Sheeri Road, Kattianwali Road and Kawhar Road, particularly issues concerning forest clearances and No Objection

Certificates (NOCs). He instructed the Forest Department to facilitate timely processing of cases in accordance with prescribed norms so that developmental works are not unnecessarily delayed.

Reviewing the Delina Irrigation Scheme and major water supply schemes serving Delina, Jalsheeri and adjoining areas, Javed Rana emphasized the need to ensure uninterrupted drinking water supply and directed the Jal Shakti Department to address all technical and infrastructural deficiencies on priority.

The meeting also discussed

flood protection and restoration works along Seesri Nallah.

The Minister called for comprehensive measures to safeguard the habitations and agricultural land from flood-related risks and directed the concerned agencies to prepare a time-bound action plan.

Reviewing the Chandsuma Water Supply Scheme, the Minister directed the concerned authorities to explore viable options for identification and development of a sustainable water source and take necessary steps for mobilization of resources required for the project.

He also had detailed discussion on issues related to drinking water shortage in Kalayban, Heewan, Sheeri, Kanispora and other adjoining areas. He instructed the officers to undertake immediate interventions to mitigate public inconvenience and ensure adequate water supply to affected areas.

MLA Javed Hassan Baig highlighted various development issues and put forth several demands concerning infrastructure development, drinking water supply, road connectivity, public utilities and other civic amenities in the constituency.

Several deputations and individuals from Baramulla constituency also raised certain issues related to their respective areas and urged the intervention of the Minister for their early redressal.

CPCO Amit Sharma reviews census operations

Visits Shopian, urges people to actively participate in census exercise

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JUNE 04: Chief Principal Census Officer (CPCO) and Director Census Operations (DCO), Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Amit Sharma, Thursday chaired a high-level meeting at Mini Secretariat, Shopian, to review the preparations and operations of the ongoing House Listing Operations (HLO), being conducted from June 1 to June 30, 2026.

At the outset, DSEO, Bilgees Zahoor briefed the chair about the topography and preparedness regarding the census enumeration process and other training programmes being held in Shopian district.

Principal Census Officer (PCO)/ Deputy Commissioner, Shopian, Shishir Gupta, also briefed the CPCO about final preparedness for ongoing HLO while attending the meeting and held discussions on the ongoing conduct of census operations in the district.

During the meeting, detailed deliberations were held on ensuring comprehensive enumeration of migratory households and streamlining field-level census operations.

Amit Sharma, as per an official statement, in his address, highly appreciated the hard work of the field staff and motivated all the enumerators and supervisors to perform their duties with dedication. He emphasized the importance of co-ordination amongst the census functionaries, timely data collection

and strict adherence to census guidelines to ensure accuracy and completeness of the enumeration process.

Officers were instructed to extend full support to census functionaries and undertake necessary measures for smooth conduct of the House Listing and Housing Census activities across the district.

The meeting also reviewed preparedness at the field level and addressed various operational issues related to the census exercise.

The CPCO urged people to actively participate in the census exercise to ensure its smooth and timely completion and also co-operate with census enumerators and provide the required information. He reiterated the significance of the Census as a vital national exercise and stressed the need for collective efforts to achieve accurate and reliable population data for informed planning and development.

Arun Kumar, Joint Chief Principal Census Officer, also briefed the meeting regarding the monitoring framework of field operations and emphasized the need for real-time tracking of the data collection process.

The meeting was attended by prominent Census related officers including Additional Deputy Commissioner (District Census Officer), Dr Zakir Hussain Faaz, ACR, Shakoor Ahmed Dar, Charge Officers, Vijay Kumar, Assistant Chief Principal Census Officer, District Coordinator, Naveen Raghav among other concerned officers and officials.

MP Rajya Sabha Ghulam Ali Khatana visits Uri

Conducts Public Darbar in Lagama



KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, JUNE 04: Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) Ghulam Ali Khatana Thursday visited Uri and conducted a Public Darbar at Town Hall Lagama to listen to public grievances and assess developmental needs of the area.

During the Public Darbar, as per an official statement, various delegations and public representatives from different blocks of Uri, including Paranpilla, Bijhama and Boniyar, met the MP and apprised him of several issues and demands concerning infrastructure development, public services, healthcare, education and other local concerns.

The MP patiently heard the grievances and suggestions put forth by the delegations and assured them that their

genuine issues would be taken up with the concerned authorities for appropriate action.

Later, Ghulam Ali Khatana chaired a meeting with district and sectoral officers to review the status of public services and developmental works in the region. He stressed the need for prompt redressal of public grievances and directed officers to ensure timely and effective resolution of issues affecting the people.

The MP reiterated his commitment to the welfare and development of Uri and emphasized coordinated efforts among all departments to improve service delivery and address public concerns in a responsive manner.

Officers from various departments, local representatives and members of the public were present during the programme.

State Taxes Commissioner reviews Kashmir division's tax compliance, enforcement measures

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 04: Commissioner, State Taxes Department, P.K. Bhat, Thursday chaired a review meeting of the State Taxes Department, Kashmir, to assess the progress of tax compliance, enforcement, and revenue monitoring across the division.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by the Additional Commissioner, State Taxes Kashmir, Parveez Ahmad Raina, along with State Taxes officers from all circles of the Kashmir Division.

During the meeting, the Commissioner reviewed the action taken report on cases identified through BISAG, audit cases, and the demand raised and realised for the year 2021-22. He also took stock of action initiated against non-filers, taxpayers who have received TDS payments but have not filed tax returns, scrutiny cases assigned for the year 2022-23, scrutiny of credit flow, and follow-up on notices issued by the department.

The review further covered action taken against taxpayers whose registrations have been cancelled, as well as those who have filed R1 and passed credit



but have not filed GSTR-3B. The Commissioner also directed special focus on circles with a predominant hotel industry, keeping in view the revival in tourism activity, so as to check any possible revenue leakages and ensure proper tax compliance.

Commissioner P.K. Bhat emphasized the need to leverage technological tools such as PRIME, BISAG, and BIFA for more effective tax compliance, detection of irregularities, prevention of fraud, and promotion of fair trade practices. He underscored that the department must continue to strengthen enforcement

mechanisms while ensuring taxpayer facilitation and accountability.

In his concluding remarks, the Additional Commissioner appreciated the efforts of the officers and urged all circles to intensify follow-up action, dispose of pending cases in a time-bound manner, and maintain a proactive approach toward revenue realization and compliance enforcement. He stressed the importance of coordinated field action, regular monitoring, and close attention to sectors with higher compliance sensitivity to further improve departmental performance.

NPSS mobile application developed to streamline various agricultural services: Director Agriculture Kashmir

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 04: Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj Ahmad Shah Thursday stressed the widespread adoption of the NPSS Mobile Application, focusing on its practical implementation and strategies for enhancing user adoption, during a programme, held at the Directorate of Agriculture, Lal Mandi, Srinagar.

The programme, as per an official statement, was attended by officers and officials from across the department.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director Agriculture Kashmir highlighted the importance of digital technologies in modernizing agricultural service delivery and ensuring greater transparency, efficiency, and accessibility for farmers. He emphasized that the NPSS Mobile Application has been developed as a vital digital platform to streamline various agricultural services and facilitate real-time data management.

The Director urged field functionaries to familiarize themselves thoroughly with the application's features and ensure its effective

implementation at the grassroots level. He stressed the need for creating awareness among farmers and stakeholders to maximize the benefits of the platform and accelerate its adoption across the Valley.

During the programme, technical experts provided detailed demonstrations of the application, explaining its functionalities, operational procedures, and practical utility in day-to-day departmental activities. Participants were also given hands-on training to enhance their understanding of the platform and its field-level applications.

Interactive sessions were held to address queries and gather feedback from participants regarding the implementation process. The suggestions and observations received during the programme will help further strengthen the application and improve user experience.

The programme concluded with a reaffirmation of the department's commitment to leveraging digital innovations for efficient service delivery and promoting technology-driven agricultural development in Jammu and Kashmir.

DDC Anantnag chairs Bankers' DLRC meeting

KT News Desk

ANANTNAG, JUNE 04: A District Level Review Committee (DLRC) meeting to review the performance of the banking sector in Anantnag district for the quarter ending March 2026 (Q4 FY 2025-26) and FY 2025-26 was held Thursday under the chairmanship of District Development Commissioner, Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat at DC Office.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by GM DIC, CPO, CAO, CAHO, DD Fisheries, DSWO, AD Handicrafts, District Officers KVIB, KVIC and NRLM, LDO RBI, DDM NABARD, Cluster Heads of J&K Bank, Chief Manager SBI, Director RSETI, District Coordinators of various Banks and officers from KVIB, KVIC and NRLM.

At the outset, the minutes of last DLRC meeting held in March 2026 were unanimously confirmed by the committee.

Presenting a comprehensive review, Lead District Manager (LDM), informed the chair that

the total deposits in the district as of March 31, 2026 stood at Rs 9697.54 crore, while advances amounted to Rs 7433.41 crore, resulting in a Credit-Deposit (CD) ratio of 79.65%.

Under the District Credit Plan (DCP) of FY 2025-26, the banking sector disbursed Rs 3314 crore under the priority sector against a target of Rs 3676.11 crore, thereby achieving 90% of the allotted target. Non-priority sector lending stood at Rs 2083.10 crore against the target of Rs 2025.74 crore, thereby achieving 103% of the target. Cumulatively, the total credit disbursed in the district was Rs 5397.04, registering 95% achievement of the overall credit target of Rs. 5701.86 for FY 2025-26.

During the meeting, the DDC reviewed the performance of banks for the Q4 as well as the whole FY 2025-26 in detail. He laid special emphasis on improving the Credit-Deposit (CD) Ratio and enhancing credit flow to priority areas, particularly agriculture and allied sectors.

Reviewing the status of crop loans, the DDC advised the banks to ensure adequate and timely credit to farmers. He appreciated the progress shown in crop loan disbursement and urged the banks to intensify the efforts and achieve targets in coordination with the Agriculture Department.

Observing the decline in some loan segments, the DDC directed the banks to take immediate corrective measures and improve lending performance. He further reviewed the progress of other priority sector advances and instructed the banks to increase lending to productive sectors.

The meeting stressed the need for greater awareness among farmers regarding government schemes, agricultural credit facilities and crop insurance schemes. Need for better coordination between banks and line departments to ensure effective implementation of schemes and improved credit delivery was emphasised.

On the occasion, Dr. Bilal also reviewed progress

under government-sponsored schemes like Svanidhi, Mudra, PMJJBY, PMSBY, APY, PMEGP, JDY, among others. He called the Social Security and Financial Inclusion Schemes as important interventions and directed the banks and concerned departments to ensure enrollment of all prospective beneficiaries in a time bound manner.

Highlighting the need for greater coordination and streamlining credit disbursement process by banks, the DDC instructed LDM and concerned officers to ensure swift disbursement of credit to the beneficiaries under flagship initiatives like HADP, Mission YUVA and PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana.

It was informed that against 3784 sanctioned cases under Mission YUVA, loans to the tune of Rs 19842.00 lakh have been disbursed in favour of 3307 cases so far. Similarly, under PM Surya Ghar credit amounting to Rs 3613 lakh has been disbursed to 2143 beneficiaries.

DC Pulwama chairs District Level Telecom Committee meeting

KT News Desk

PULWAMA, JUNE 04: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom Thursday chaired a meeting of the District Level Telecom Committee (DLTC) at the Administrative Complex here to review the status of telecom infrastructure, mobile network coverage, BharatNet implementation and other connectivity-related issues across the district.

During the meeting, as per an official statement, a detailed presentation highlighting the progress achieved under various telecom connectivity initiatives being implemented in the district was presented. Discussions focused on mobile tower saturation, augmentation of signals, phase-wise coverage network status, Right of Way (RoW) issues and the progress of the BharatNet project.

The Deputy Commissioner took a detailed review of the project-wise status of mobile tower installations and



the progress of the BSNL 4G Saturation Project across the district. He also reviewed the status of signal augmentation, coverage in underserved and shadow areas, and issues related to pending sites, including power connectivity, land availability and other logistical requirements necessary for their early completion.

Reviewing the progress of BharatNet, Dr. Qayoom stressed the need for expediting the remaining works to ensure seamless broadband connectivity in rural areas. He directed

the Assistant Commissioner Panchayat to closely monitor the progress of BharatNet works and facilitate coordination among the concerned departments and executing agencies for their timely completion.

On the occasion, the DC also sought details from the Superintending Engineer, KPDC, regarding the status of power extension to the constructed towers and directed him to ensure timely power extension to all constructed and planned towers.

MDL demonstrates AI-based forest fire detection, management system to Minister Rana

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 04: A delegation of Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), a Navratna Public Sector Undertaking under the Union Ministry for Defence, on Thursday called on Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana and made a detailed presentation on "INFRASURE", an Artificial Intelligence-based Forest Fire Detection, Firefighting and Forest Management System.

The presentation focused on the use of advanced technologies for strengthening the forest protection, early detection of forest fires, wildlife surveillance, disaster management and environmental conservation. The proposed system integrates the ground-based, aerial and satellite technologies with a centralised monitoring and command mechanism aimed at enhancing the preparedness and response capabilities.



The MDL team informed the Minister that the proposed "INFRASURE" platform is an AI-enabled system designed for early forest fire detection, forest surveillance, disaster management and real-time monitoring through an integrated command-and-control mechanism.

The team highlighted various components of the proposed solution, including forest fire detection and firefighting systems, aerial firefighting platforms,

man-animal conflict detection and alarm systems and satellite-based forest management tools. The delegation informed the Minister that the technology is designed to facilitate early detection of forest fires, improve response time, strengthen forest surveillance and support effective disaster management through real-time monitoring and decision-making.

Javed Rana appreciated the presentation and emphasised the importance of adopting

innovative, technology-driven solutions for protection and sustainable management of forest resources. He observed that advanced monitoring and early warning systems can play a significant role in mitigating forest fire incidents, reducing ecological losses and strengthening environmental conservation efforts.

The Minister directed the MDL team to submit a comprehensive proposal tailored to the specific requirements and geographical conditions of Jammu and Kashmir, addressing the Union Territory's unique challenges related to forest fire management, wildlife protection and disaster response.

The Minister said that the government would undertake a thorough assessment of the proposal and examine its feasibility and potential benefits for strengthening forest protection and environmental conservation efforts across the Union Territory.

KT News Desk

Baltal, Jun 04: Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad on Thursday conducted an extensive inspection of the Baltal axis to review the sanitation preparations for the forthcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY) 2026.

The Secretary had a detailed on-ground assessment of sanitation facilities from Nilgrath Helipad to Baltal Base Camp and Domail Camp.

He was accompanied by Director General Sanitation Anoo Malhotra, Assistant Commissioner Development Ganderbal Altaf Hussain, Block Development Officer and other district officers.

During the visit, Asad directed the field officers to closely monitor the installation of sanitation assets and accelerate execution to ensure completion within the prescribed timelines. He



emphasized the need for increasing the daily pace of toilet installation and maintaining strict adherence to the approved plans.

The Secretary inspected waste collection system including drain cradles and directed the officials to ensure their continuous functionality to prevent blockages. He also stressed the deployment of dedicated sanitation personnel at key road junctions and Yatra route, with clearly defined areas of responsibility.

Reviewing toilets, washrooms, dustbins, greywater drainage systems, waste segregation sites and plastic waste management units, he underscored the need for maintaining high standards of cleanliness, accessibility and uninterrupted utility services.

Highlighting the importance of behavioural change initiatives, the Secretary called for intensified IEC activities to encourage proper use of sanitation facilities by pilgrims.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

India respects

Darakhshan Andrabi, Chairperson, J&K Waqf Board, Prof. Nilofer Khan, Vice-Chancellor, Kashmir University, Prof. Meena Sharma, Organiser (Convener), saints, senior officers of the judiciary, police and civil administration, faculty members of various universities, students and public in large number attended the conference. (KNO)

Preserving J&K's

Jammu and Kashmir, the crown of Bharat, has made a significant contribution to this rich heritage and cultural tradition," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor said culture is not merely a relic of the past, but a living force that shapes the present and guides the future.

"Culture is not the root of the past alone; it is a living truth that shapes our present and can pave the way for our future," he said.

LG Sinha said master artisans and craftsmen of Jammu and Kashmir have preserved the soul of the region's heritage for generations, adding that the administration has been continuously working to support them.

"Jammu and Kashmir has artisans who transform ordinary wood into timeless art forms. There are hundreds of such artists who weave thousands of stories of our culture through their craft," he said.

Referring to his interactions with artisans and workers, the Lieutenant Governor said he had personally witnessed the dedication and creativity of craftsmen associated with traditional arts, handicrafts and music.

He said artists, musicians and craftsmen are the true custodians of the region's traditions and cultural continuity.

"They are the builders of continuity of our traditions and heritage," he said.

Describing cultural festivals and heritage events as "living schools," Sinha said such platforms connect tradition with innovation.

"I see such festivals as institutions of living heritage where traditions and modern aspirations are connected," he said.

Highlighting the role of youth, LG Sinha said participation of the younger generation is essential for safeguarding and promoting traditional crafts and cultural practices.

"If we want to preserve our heritage, we must move it forward. One of our biggest responsibilities is to connect the youth of Jammu and Kashmir with handlooms, handicrafts, art and music," he said.

He said the future of the region's cultural identity depends on the younger generation and stressed the need to ensure they remain connected with their valuable heritage.

The Lieutenant Governor said several initiatives have been taken in recent years to strengthen the handloom and handicrafts sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

"In the last few years, many unique products have received GI tagging and several crafts have gained better recognition and market access," he said.

He added that many new craftsmen have emerged through various employment and promotion schemes, while artisans associated with traditional crafts and the silk industry have also received support from the concerned departments.

LG Sinha said the administration has undertaken extensive measures to provide artisans with better facilities, market opportunities and institutional support.

Addressing buyers participating in the expo, the Lieutenant Governor urged them to support local artisans by purchasing handmade products.

"You are not merely buying handicraft products, but taking home the priceless heritage of thousands of years of ancient Indian art and craftsmanship," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also referred to initiatives launched over the past five to six years, including 'Vocal for Local' and 'One District One Product,' saying these programmes have significantly improved the business landscape and livelihoods in Jammu and Kashmir.

"These efforts have brought positive changes in the lives of many people associated with this sector," he said, while urging people to actively participate in the development and promotion of the handicrafts and handloom sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

Lieutenant Governor Attends

Rang-e-Kashmir Cultural Festival

This week-long event showcases Jammu Kashmir's priceless handlooms and handicrafts and draws both art lovers and buyers

The Lieutenant Governor applauded the efforts of Pumbuch Cultural Heritage Foundation and its Director Mrs. Superna Sapru, for conserving, nurturing, and reviving Jammu Kashmir's abundant cultural heritage.

He said the mission of foundation, injects new energy into traditions so the voices of our artisans, craftsmen, and traditional artists will continue to resonate for generations to come.

"Culture is not the static artifact of history but in fact it is a living force that shapes our present and guides our future. Jammu Kashmir is home to exceptional artisans who can turn an ordinary piece of wood into something timeless. There are hundreds of esteemed craftspeople who weave thousands of years of cultural stories into fabric. There are papier-mache artisans who carve the very soul of Jammu Kashmir into each piece," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that there are renowned musicians in Jammu Kashmir who are carrying the region's melodic traditions.

"These musicians are guardians of our identity, keepers of our memories, and the makers of our tradition's continuity. This event is a vibrant classroom where tradition and innovation converge, where the old inspires the new, and where people come together to celebrate the diversity that defines us. I believe one of our foremost responsibilities is to connect Jammu Kashmir's youth with handloom, handicraft, and the arts. The future of our culture rests in youth's hands and they must be made aware of the invaluable heritage," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He felicitated various renowned artists for their significant contribution at the event organised by Pumbuch Cultural Heritage Foundation in collaboration with Department of Tourism J&K.

Vikramjit Singh, Commissioner Secretary Industries & Commerce; Ms. Superna Sapru, Director, Pumbuch Cultural Heritage Foundation; Akshay Labroo, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar; Masrat-ul-Islam, Director Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir; senior officials of police and civil administration, members of Pumbuch Cultural Heritage Foundation and prominent artists and artisans were present. (KNO)

'Inadequate reactive

347kV and 178kV respectively. "The low voltage is a perennial issue, and it has been deliberated in various meetings as well as in the recent meeting held in 2025," it reads.

It also said, "Further Grid-India in quarterly operational feedback 2025 also highlighted low voltages at 400kV Amargarh, Wagoora and Wanpoh S/s, 400kV voltages are reaching 360kV at Amargarh, Wagoora and Wanpoh substations."

NRPC also said that due to inadequate compensation in J&K STU network, severe low voltages have been observed in J&K grid.

As already reported by this news agency, Jammu and Kashmir has indicated that a power load requirement of up to 7 Gigawatts (GWs) by the coming five years needs to be considered in the winter season—signalling major infrastructure upgrades to avoid seasonal blackouts. (KNO)

Govt ensures

CM Dheeraj Gupta, ACS APD Dr. Ashish Chandra Verma, ACS Finance Shailendra Kumar, Commissioner Secretary Planning, Development and Monitoring Alice Vaz, Secretary Labour & Employment Kumar Rajeev Ranjan, Mission Director Mission YUVA, Director IIM Jammu, representatives of J&K Bank, and other concerned officers.

The Chief Minister congratulated the beneficiaries and expressed hope that the financial assistance would enable them to establish and expand sustainable business ventures, thereby generating employment and contributing to the region's economic growth.

Speaking on the broader vision of Mission YUVA, the Chief Minister said the initiative represents a transformative step towards building a robust ecosystem for youth entrepreneurship

in Jammu and Kashmir. He stated that the government is committed to ensuring that young people are not job seekers alone, but job creators who drive innovation and economic progress.

He emphasized that Mission YUVA is designed to provide structured handholding, access to credit, skill development, and mentorship support to aspiring entrepreneurs. The Chief Minister said the programme is intended to bridge the gap between ideas and execution by simplifying access to institutional finance and improving coordination between banks, government departments, and training institutions.

He further added that sustained focus on youth empowerment through Mission YUVA would help unlock the immense potential of Jammu and Kashmir's young population, particularly in sectors such as services, agriculture-based enterprises, tourism, and small-scale manufacturing.

The Chief Minister reiterated that inclusive economic growth remains a top priority of the government, and initiatives like Mission YUVA are central to achieving long-term self-reliance and employment generation in Jammu and Kashmir.

LG directs DC Reasi

and dry across Jammu and Kashmir, it added. The department has issued an advisory warning of thunderstorms, lightning, hailstorms and gusty winds with speeds of 40-50 kmph, gusting up to 60 kmph, at isolated to scattered places during the ongoing wet spell.

People have been advised to stay indoors during thunderstorms and strong winds and avoid venturing into vulnerable areas during adverse weather conditions.

The advisory also called for suspension of boating and shikara operations during periods of inclement weather.

The department warned that brief intense showers at isolated places in both Kashmir and Jammu divisions could trigger flash floods, mudslides and localised waterlogging.

The rainfall comes after a sharp rise in temperatures across the Valley over the past week due to prolonged hot and dry weather.

The change in weather has brought relief to people and improved conditions at several tourist destinations, including Pahalgam, which continued to record relatively lower temperatures compared to many other parts of the region.

Thousands of tourists have arrived in Kashmir in recent days to escape the intense heat prevailing in several parts of the country, officials said.

The Meteorological Department said it was monitoring the weather situation and advised people to follow official advisories and take necessary precautions during the forecast period. (KNO)

Ensure uninterrupted

health facilities well on time, besides process should be expedited for procuring other necessary medical equipment.

The Minister reiterated the government's commitment towards strengthening healthcare delivery through an efficient, transparent and accountable medical procurement and distribution system across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister emphasized that transparency, accountability and efficiency must remain the guiding principles of JKMSCL's operations. She directed the corporation to further strengthen monitoring mechanisms and adopt best practices in procurement and distribution to eliminate delays, reduce wastage and ensure optimal utilization of resources.

Highlighting the importance of quality assurance, Sakeena Itoo stressed that no compromise should be made on the quality of medicines and medical equipment supplied to healthcare institutions. She instructed the corporation to reinforce quality control procedures at every stage, from procurement and testing to storage and final delivery, while ensuring strict adherence to established standards and regulatory norms.

The Minister also called for regular quality audits, enhanced laboratory testing and rigorous vendor evaluation processes.

Expressing concern over delays in the supply of essential drugs and equipment, the Minister

directed the corporation to maintain strict timelines for procurement and delivery. She instructed the concerned officials to closely monitor supplier performance and initiate appropriate action against firms failing to meet contractual obligations.

The Minister laid special emphasis on ensuring uninterrupted availability of life-saving medicines and critical healthcare equipment, particularly in remote, rural and underserved regions. She directed officials to maintain adequate buffer stocks of essential drugs and strengthen logistics planning to prevent shortages in hospitals and health centres.

Reviewing the status of digital inventory and supply management systems, Sakeena Itoo called for greater utilization of technology-driven monitoring tools to improve real-time tracking of medicines and equipment. She stressed the importance of accurate record-keeping and data-driven decision-making for improving efficiency and responsiveness across the healthcare supply chain.

The Minister also urged healthcare institutions to regularly update their requirements and coordinate closely with JKMSCL to facilitate timely procurement and distribution. She highlighted the need for stronger institutional coordination to ensure that patients receive uninterrupted access to quality healthcare services.

She also directed the hospital administrators to submit monthly reports on number of essential medical tests like CT Scans, MRI, and other tests carried in Government hospitals.

Reaffirming the government's resolve to strengthen the healthcare sector, Sakeena Itoo stated that accessibility, affordability and quality of healthcare services remain among the top priorities of the administration. She emphasized that JKMSCL must continue evolving into a more responsive, efficient and patient-centric organization capable of meeting the growing healthcare needs of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Among others, the meeting was attended by MD NHM, Akriti Sagar; Director SKIMS, Dr. Ashraf Ganie; MD JKMSCL, Tariq Hussain Ganie; Principals of all GMCs, Medical Superintendent of various hospitals, and other concerned officers of Health and Medical Education department.

ICMR launches

screening that can be integrated into the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NC). The programme will focus on increasing screening coverage, ensuring early diagnosis, and strengthening referral and treatment pathways across the healthcare system.

Under the project, screening interventions will target women aged 30 years and above for breast cancer, sexually active women aged 30 to 60 years for cervical cancer, adults aged 18 years and above for oral cancer, and individuals aged 40 years and above for gastrointestinal cancers.

The study is expected to be conducted through district hospitals, community health centres, primary health centres and Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, with at least one full district required to be included in each proposal.

ICMR has emphasised the need for a culturally sensitive and geographically adapted model tailored to the unique healthcare challenges of Jammu and Kashmir. The project will also explore ways to involve non-specialist doctors, frontline healthcare workers and ASHAs in cancer screening, counselling, referral and follow-up care.

Among the key objectives are improving awareness about cancer prevention, increasing participation in screening programmes, ensuring that screen-positive individuals receive timely diagnosis and treatment, and generating evidence that can guide future policy decisions.

The council said the study will use both quantitative and qualitative research methods and will evaluate indicators such as screening uptake, confirmed cancer cases, treatment initiation rates, patient satisfaction, community awareness levels and programme feasibility.

Researchers from medical colleges, universities, research institutions, government and semi-government organisations, and eligible NGOs are invited to submit proposals through

the ICMR's online EPMS portal. Collaborative and multidisciplinary projects with strong links to public health systems will be given preference.

The online submission process opened on June 1, and the last date for submission of EOIs is June 25, 2026. Shortlisted teams will subsequently work with ICMR and the J&K government to develop a detailed implementation protocol.

Health experts believe the initiative could play a crucial role in improving early cancer detection in the region, where many patients continue to be diagnosed at advanced stages, reducing treatment success rates and increasing healthcare costs.

If successfully implemented, the programme is expected to strengthen cancer screening services at the grassroots level and provide a roadmap for a sustainable and scalable cancer control strategy across Jammu and Kashmir. (KNO)

NC using statehood

claimed that several schools continue to face an acute shortage of teaching staff, with some institutions functioning with only one or two teachers despite having hundreds of students. He also alleged that many hospitals are struggling due to a shortage of doctors and cited Banihal as an example.

He claimed that dissatisfaction existed within the ruling party itself and said even some of its legislators were unhappy with the leadership. "The Omar Abdullah-led government has left people on God's mercy and failed to address their day-to-day issues," he alleged.

Highlighting the role of youth, Khatana said young people in Jammu and Kashmir were increasingly focusing on education, sports, entrepreneurship and social reform initiatives.

"The youth of Jammu and Kashmir are taking the lead in sports, startups and the fight against drugs. They are moving towards development, peace and progress and turning away from those who used them for vested interests over the past several decades," he said.

The BJP MP also praised the efforts of security forces, saying their coordinated work alongside the public had helped improve the overall situation in the region.

"Our security forces deserve appreciation for their role in bringing peace and stability. Through coordinated efforts with the people, they have helped Jammu and Kashmir move away from stone pelting, bloodshed and mourning towards an atmosphere of peace and development," he said. (KNO)

Demand for 'alternate

industry is already witnessing concern among travellers over the proposed restrictions. "At present, we need an alternative airport because this is peak tourism time. A prolonged closure will create serious operational problems for tourists and travel operators," he said.

Tramboo said travel agents are receiving constant queries from domestic and international clients regarding scheduled trips.

"We are getting calls from B2B operators and tourists asking what will happen to their travel plans and bookings. There is uncertainty among travellers, and that can affect tourist inflow if timely alternatives are not arranged," he said.

Mukhtar Ahmad, a hotelier from Srinagar, said the Valley's hospitality sector depends largely on uninterrupted air connectivity.

"Hotels and tourism businesses rely heavily on flight connectivity. Even a temporary disruption can impact bookings, occupancy and employment associated with tourism activities," he said.

Gowhar, a houseboat owner at Dal Lake, said any disruption in flight services during the summer months would directly impact small tourism-dependent families.

"Most tourists prefer air travel to Kashmir. If flights are affected, houseboat bookings and tourism activities will also decline. Thousands of families linked with tourism may suffer financially," he said.

Stakeholders urged the administration and the Civil Aviation Ministry to finalise contingency plans well in advance to minimise inconvenience to passengers and ensure that Kashmir's tourism sector does not suffer during the crucial travel season. (KNO)

Insurgency no longer major issue in Northeast, Shah urges CMs to push for dev

PTI

Shillong, Jun 4: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said insurgency was no longer a major issue in the Northeast and urged state governments in the region to shift focus from law and order to safeguarding citizens' rights and accelerating development through emerging technologies and new economic sectors.

Addressing the 73rd Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) here, Shah said the region had witnessed a significant transformation over the past decade, with peace replacing unrest and opening new avenues for growth and investment.

"Insurgency is no longer a major issue in the Northeast. The focus of state governments should now shift from maintaining law and order to safeguarding the rights of citizens and ensuring that the benefits of development reach every household," he posted



on X.

The home minister asked the Northeastern states to prepare for the future by building infrastructure and ecosystems around artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and blockchain technologies.

"States should develop infrastructure for AI, machine learning and blockchain so that the younger generation can take advantage of emerging opportunities in the global

economy," Shah said.

He also called on the states to aggressively market the Northeast's strengths in sectors such as agarwood, foreign trade and health tourism to attract investment and create jobs.

"The Northeast has immense potential in agarwood cultivation and processing, cross-border trade and health tourism. These sectors should be promoted in a mission mode to generate

employment and enhance incomes," he said.

Claiming that the Narendra Modi-led government had brought lasting peace to the region, Shah said the Northeast had been transformed "from a hotspot of disputes to a hotspot of opportunities".

"The Modi government has ended the era of violence in the Northeast. Today, the region is progressing rapidly, and the NEC is serving as an institution for strategic planning, fulfilling the aspirations of the people while preserving and promoting the unique culture of the region," he said.

Shah said the NEC had evolved into a key platform for coordinating development efforts among the Northeastern states and the Centre, and stressed the need for greater collaboration to sustain the region's growth momentum.

The plenary session was attended by chief ministers, governors, senior officials of the Northeastern states and representatives of the Centre.

'Don't have courage for retest, sorry Mummy, Papa': NEET aspirant's note found days after suicide

PTI

Nagpur, Jun 4: Days after an 18-year-old female NEET aspirant hailing from Madhya Pradesh allegedly ended her life in Maharashtra's Nagpur, her family stumbled upon a note written by her, in which she apologised to them, saying she did not have the courage to appear for a retest of the medical entrance.

In the emotional note, the student, Akanksha Chaturvedi, said there was "no guarantee" that she would score good marks in the retest, and said she had "ruined everything" for them. Akanksha had appeared for the NEET-UG exam on May 3. After the test, she was upbeat and confident that she would score good marks. But the cancellation of that exam following allegations of a paper leak dashed her hopes and left her anxious and upset, according to her family members.

On May 12, the National Testing Agency cancelled the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test Undergraduate (NEET UG)-2026 held on May 3 after paper leak allegations. A re-examination was then scheduled for June 21. Nearly 23 lakh candidates had registered for the test. Akanksha, a native of Maunjanj district in MP, was preparing for the NEET at a coaching institute in Nagpur.

However, a week after the announcement about cancellation of the May 3 exam, she was found hanging in her room at their home in Nagpur on May 20.

Rajnath approves 2-fold increase in financial ceiling for field commanders to boost operational efficiency



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 4: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday approved a two-fold increase in financial powers for field commanders to strengthen operational efficiency and ensure faster conclusion of contracts as well as execution of projects.

Special financial powers delegated to the commanders of Indian Army, Air Force and Indian Navy have been increased significantly along with a 100 per cent increase in the total ceiling provided to meet urgent operational requirements, the defence ministry said.

In addition to the enhancement in financial powers, new provisions have been included to promote joint service procurement by the lead service with higher delegation than the normal procurement, it said.

"Many new Competent Financial Authorities have been

introduced to decentralise the procurement of goods and services," it said. Defence Minister Singh released a revised manual for 'Delegation of Financial Powers for the Defence Services' at an event in New Delhi.

"The enhancement in the financial powers has been made up to 100 per cent, and even more than double in some cases. This would further strengthen the operational efficiency of field commanders, and lead to faster conclusion of contracts and execution of projects," the ministry said.

It said the financial powers delegated for indigenisation and research and development within the military ecosystem have been doubled to boost 'Aatmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in defence by minimising the dependency on foreign original equipment manufacturers.

The revised delegation of financial powers will facilitate procurement of more than Rs 1.25

lakh crore through the revenue route, as per current year budgetary allocations, the ministry said. Financial powers were last notified in 2021. The revision was necessitated due to the expansion in force level and to cater to the increased expenditure on operations and sustenance vis-a-vis the increase in budgetary allocation, the ministry said.

This revised delegation of financial powers, along with the revised Defence Procurement Manual, will give a fillip to defence procurement with expeditious decision making, it noted.

This will lead to timely availability of resources as per the needs of the defence forces, the ministry said in a statement.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen N S Raja Subramani, Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi, Navy Chief Admiral Krishna Swaminathan and Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh were present at the event.

'Delhi mein sab chalta hai': Hotel owner's greed behind illegal expansion; drove past blaze site



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 4: "Delhi mein sab chalta hai" (everything works in Delhi). This is what the owner of the Malviya Nagar hotel told police when confronted about major violations. He showed little remorse, even driving past the burning building without stopping during rescue operations following a blaze that claimed 21 lives, including 12 foreign nationals, and left several others injured, officials said on Thursday.

According to police, the accused, Lavkesh Bajaj, is non-cooperative during interrogation.

He was arrested following the tragedy at Flourish Stay B&B in south Delhi's Hauz Rani area on Wednesday, one of the deadliest fires in the capital in recent years.

Police questioning has revealed what investigators describe as a pattern of greed, regulatory violations and disregard for safety norms.

Police sources said Bajaj told investigators that after the hotel business began generating substantial profits, the belief that "everything works in Delhi" encouraged him to illegally expand the property from two-and-a-half storeys to

five floors.

Officials said the property didn't have a licence for a restaurant; it was only permitted to operate as a tea shop. Originally permitted to operate only six rooms under Delhi government's bed-and-breakfast policy, the establishment allegedly expanded to around 25-26 rooms, including some in the basement.

Police said rooms were rented for between Rs 3,000 and Rs 15,000 a day, while additional income came from a ground-floor restaurant.

Investigators found that Bajaj allegedly obtained licences in the name of Jai Mishra, who managed the hotel's operations and accounts.

Five police teams are tracing Mishra, who is absconding.

Sources said the building had earlier received a temporary accommodation licence during the 2010 Commonwealth Games under a different owner when the city was facing a shortage of rooms. During interrogation, Bajaj told investigators he owned at least four hotels in the area and rarely visited them. Police sources said he claimed to have handed over the establishment's day-to-day management to Mishra after purchasing the building

in 2022.

Investigators alleged that when the fire broke out, Bajaj happened to be passing near the building but did not stop despite noticing the commotion. Instead, he allegedly left the area and kept moving across different parts of Delhi before being tracked down and arrested later that day.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Southern Range) Vijay Kumar said they have got his four days' police remand. "We will ask him about the staff members who were present there as all of them are absconding," he said.

He said the sections of the FIR are correct and multiple sections have been added due to the act and circumstance of the incident.

He also said many violations were noted.

"The premises had permission for only six rooms, but there were 25 rooms. No gas connection was taken in the name of the premises, but four cylinders were present," he said.

The probe has now widened beyond the immediate cause of the fire, with investigators examining alleged illegal construction, fire safety violations, licence irregularities, ownership records and factors that may have contributed to the high death toll.

Malviya Nagar tragedy puts spotlight on Delhi govt's B&B policy rules

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 4: A day after the fatal fire in Malviya Nagar claimed 21 lives, including 12 foreigners, the Delhi government's bed and breakfast B&B policy is under scrutiny.

According to experts, the policy, officially known as 'National Capital Territory of Delhi (Incredible India) Bed and Breakfast Establishment (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2007' -- which started during the Commonwealth Games held in Delhi in 2010 -- has serious loopholes regarding safety norms.

"When the B&B scheme was started in Delhi during the Commonwealth Games, there was a provision that in the residential building, the owner had to live in the building, which was later removed from the scheme. In this accident, we see that the owner was not living with them,"

Rajesh Pawar, former Delhi chief fire officer, told PTI videos.

Panwar said in the policy, there was no provision for fire extinguishers or fire safety.

"There was only one point that heat and smoke detectors should be desirable rather than mandatory, making installation entirely at the owner's discretion. I think heat and smoke detectors should be mandatory in the policy."

He said the initial phase of the scheme included a provision to attach an approved building plan from the local authorities.

"But after almost six months, the provision was removed. If this provision had remained, this establishment would never have been able to open in such a congested area. And even at that time, it was limited to six rooms and 18 occupancies for 18 people," he said.

RBI governor to announce interest rate decision today

PTI

Mumbai, Jun 4: Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Friday will announce the decision of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) amid expectations that the key interest rate will be left unchanged at 5.25 per cent, as the central bank adopts a cautious approach in view of the West Asia conflict posing challenges for inflation as well as economic growth.

The six-member MPC started its three-day deliberations on Wednesday.

A PTI poll of economists and treasury heads showed that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to keep the benchmark repo rate unchanged this time. Most of the respondents expect the central bank to resume policy tightening later in FY27 amid mounting inflation risks.

Of the respondents surveyed, 11 expect the MPC to maintain the status quo on rates, while four foresee a 0.25 per cent hike. Most participants expect at



least two rate hikes during the fiscal year, while some anticipate more than two increases if inflationary pressures intensify.

Addressing an event on Wednesday, State Bank of India Chairman C S Setty said the

economic growth process will stabilise if the RBI opts for a status quo in policy rates amid inflation challenges.

He said market expectations broadly point towards a pause in rates. Shishir Bajjal, International

Partner, Chairman and Managing Director, Knight Frank India, too, expects the MPC to keep policy rates unchanged.

"A stable interest rate environment is particularly important for the real estate sector, where affordability and buyer sentiment remain closely linked to borrowing costs. Continued rate stability would support housing demand, sustain momentum in residential sales, and encourage investment across the broader real estate ecosystem," Bajjal added.

The central government has tasked the RBI to ensure that consumer price index (CPI) based retail inflation stays at 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent).

Chaired by Malhotra, other MPC members are Nagesh Kumar, (Director and Chief Executive, ISID), Saugata Bhattacharya (Economist), Ram Singh, (Director, Delhi School of Economics), Poonam Gupta (Deputy Governor, RBI), and Indranil Bhattacharyya (Executive Director, RBI).

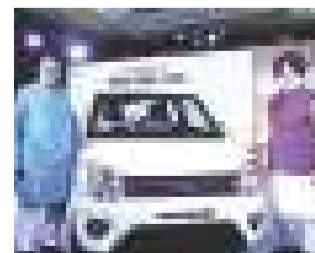
Maruti Suzuki launches India's first flex-fuel car Wagon R in push for ethanol mobility

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 4: Maruti Suzuki India Ltd on Thursday launched India's first flex-fuel car, Wagon R, engineered specifically for ethanol-blended fuel compatibility. A flex-fuel car gives the flexibility to customers to run on any blend of ethanol and petrol from E20 to E100.

The car comes with advanced ECU calibration capable of adapting to any ethanol blend between E20 (20 per cent ethanol-blended petrol) to E100 (which would allow vehicles to run on nearly pure ethanol).

Maruti Suzuki in a statement said it is introducing flex-fuel technology in the Wagon R, a



favourite brand that has long pioneered alternate fuel vehicles in the country, including CNG and LPG. With the launch of India's first flex-fuel car, Maruti Suzuki said it is bringing innovation aligned with national energy security and sustainability goals. Speaking

at the launch event, Road Transport and Highways minister Nitin Gadkari said India imports a large quantity of crude oil every year, and biofuels like ethanol are an important pathway towards reducing this dependence while strengthening our rural economy.

"Flex-fuel vehicles can create a strong and sustainable demand for ethanol, benefiting our farmers, industry, and the environment together," Gadkari added. The minister said he is confident that the initiative will encourage other car manufacturers to launch their flex-fuel models and oil industry to enhance ethanol distribution infrastructure.

US House approves war powers resolution to halt military action against Iran

AP

Washington, Jun 4: The US House approved a war powers resolution Wednesday that would halt the US military action against Iran, defying President Donald Trump as a handful of Republicans joined with Democrats to end the three-month-long war that has reordered politics at home and abroad.

House Speaker Mike Johnson had tried to prevent an outcome that would show the mounting opposition to the war, abruptly shutting down floor action two weeks ago when the war powers resolution was on the verge of approval. But displeasure has only grown as the conflict drags on and as Trump struggles to negotiate a quick resolution.

The roll call Wednesday was 215-208, and cheers erupted in the House chamber.

"This reckless and costly war of choice needs to end today," House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York said earlier in the week.

"All we need are a handful of Republicans to join us and we can end this reckless and costly war of



choice — a war that has cost the American taxpayer over \$100 billion — that's extraordinary — and left our country in a weaker position relative to Iran."

Opposition to war grows

It's the fourth time the House has tried to curb the US war against Iran, and the first time the House was able to pass the measure. The Senate advanced its own war powers resolution last month when a handful of GOP senators broke ranks with the Republican president in a rare show of political pushback

from his party.

Each time Democrats have pushed forward the war powers resolution, the vote tallies have inched higher as political unease with the US war swells. Trump had campaigned for the White House on a promise to end US entanglements abroad and focus more on domestic issues, but the war has shifted attention back to the Middle East.

Johnson insisted Trump is "laser focused" on the domestic front, particularly ahead of the midterm elections that will

determine control of Congress.

The speaker said he spent three hours at the White House with the president this week as Trump is calling on allies to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz for commerce, especially the flow of oil.

Since the US joined Israel in launching the Feb. 28 strikes on Iran, Americans have seen gas prices spike at the pumps, adding to inflationary pressure on consumer spending.

Iran has been able to interrupt shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital channel for a large segment of the world's oil, natural gas and related products such as fertilizer.

"We're working on that final piece," said Johnson, R-Louisiana. "The entire world has an interest in the Strait of Hormuz being reopened for commerce. That's what we're working on."

While a ceasefire in the conflict was declared in April, it remains uneasy and uncertain. Talks for a more durable end to the fighting have dragged, increasingly complicated by Israel's broadening war with Iran-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon. Meanwhile, military strikes between the US and Iran continue to flare.

Hezbollah rejects ceasefire plan declared in Washington



REUTERS

Beirut/Jerusalem, Jun 4: Hezbollah rejected a ceasefire plan agreed by the Lebanese and Israeli governments in US-mediated talks, as Israel kept up strikes in southern Lebanon on Thursday and said it wouldn't be withdrawing from the south.

The United States announced on Wednesday that Lebanon and Israel had agreed to implement a ceasefire contingent on Iran-backed Hezbollah ceasing fire and evacuating its fighters

from areas of southern Lebanon near the border.

Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem, whose Lebanese Shiite Muslim group is not a party to the talks, said the negotiations were shameful, rejecting the Washington declaration as "a roadmap for the annihilation of a section of the Lebanese people and the enslavement of the rest."

"As long as the occupation exists, the resistance will continue," he said in a written statement.

Hostilities between

Hezbollah and Israel reignited on March 2, when the group opened fire in support of Tehran as it came under US-Israeli attack. The war has ground on despite several ceasefires declared from Washington since April.

The war has become a sticking point in diplomacy toward resolving the regional conflict. Tehran has demanded an end to Israeli attacks in Lebanon as part of any deal.

Qassem said a ceasefire must include southern Lebanon, where Israel has seized a self-declared security zone, which it says aims to shield northern Israel from Hezbollah attack. Qassem said that towns in northern Israel would not be secure "as long as our villages are unsafe, bombed, destroyed, and our people are being killed."

The commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Quds Force — which established Hezbollah in 1982 — said "the minimum demand of the resistance" is Israel's withdrawal to positions it held before the war began and Israeli forces invaded the south.

50th Test: Pant gets advice from Gambhir

PTI

Mullanpur, Jun 4: The lofted strokes still carry the same thrill, but two days before his landmark 50th Test appearance, Rishabh Pant was seen embracing a different approach. During India's training session ahead of the one-off Test against Afghanistan, the dynamic wicketkeeper-batter appeared more measured, both in body language and intent, seemingly heeding the advice of head coach Gautam Gambhir. It is no secret within Indian cricket circles that Gambhir was deeply frustrated by Pant's reckless shot selection during India's previous red-ball outing against South Africa in Guwahati.

Pant's dismissal in both innings became a major talking point, drawing criticism at a time when the team expected greater responsibility from one of its senior players. And when Pant was seen negotiating spinners during the nets, the intent was on rock solid defence with Gambhir's hawk-eye prying on him from



behind the nets. The head down copybook front-foot defence and backfoot defence were on display time and again. Those glorious hits would occasionally come out of close.

Watching Pant, one could gauge that Gambhir must have had some plainspeak with the burly man from Rourkee.

"I think he's committed to playing a good role model and senior player. I actually heard him and Gauti (Gambhir's nickname) having a chat around that yesterday.

WFI suspends five wrestlers over fake birth certificates

Referee commission member showcaused

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 4: The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) on Thursday suspended five wrestlers, including U20 Asian Championship trails winner Deepanshu, for four years after their birth certificates were found to be fake during a verification exercise in its crackdown on age fraud in the sport.

Deepanshu, who had won the men's freestyle 65kg event on Wednesday, has been replaced by Pawan Balaji Dhayagude in the squad for the championship, starting June 27 in Pattaya, Thailand.

The other suspended wrestlers are Tanuj Antil, Baljot Singh and Nikhil Dalal and Saket Drall, who reached the final of the 86kg trials. He was removed from the final and was replaced by Sahil Dalal, who eventually grabbed the place in the Indian team.

In an order issued by WFI president Sanjay Kumar Singh, the federation said it had taken a "very serious view" of wrestlers submitting forged birth certificates to gain eligibility for participation in National Wrestling Championships.

WFI said discrepancies in birth certificates had surfaced in several cases in recent months, leading to suspensions and widespread reporting in print,

North Korea unveils a new plant to produce fuel for nuclear weapons

AP

Seoul, Jun 4: North Korea on Thursday unveiled a new facility to produce nuclear bomb fuels, with leader Kim Jong Un announcing plans to bolster the country's nuclear forces "at an exponential rate."

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff assessed the site as a uranium enrichment plant and said it was closely coordinating with the United States to monitor North Korean nuclear activities. The South's military did not immediately release further details.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said the facility used "more sophisticated technology" but didn't provide further details. It's not clear where the plant is or when it began operations. State media photos showed what appeared



to be a large hall housing centrifuges, which are needed to enrich weapons-grade uranium.

The disclosure of the new factory is in line with Kim's repeated vows to expand his nuclear weapons program to cope with what he called escalating US-led military threats.

KCNA said Kim visited the nuclear facility on Wednesday to learn about its operations and its long-term production plan.

KCNA quoted Kim as saying the urgency for bolstering up the country's nuclear war deterrent, both in quality and quantity, has grown

because of confrontations with "the most ferocious enemies," an apparent reference to the United States and South Korea. Kim cited other unspecified threats and crises as a need to boost North Korea's nuclear capability, it said.

Kim claims progress in bomb fuel production

Kim claimed that North Korea's weapons-grade nuclear materials production capacity has more than doubled compared with five years ago, according to KCNA. It wasn't possible to independently verify his claim.

After a meeting at the facility, Kim said that he and other top officials "confirmed the order of priority for implementing the ambitious future plan designed to beef up our state's nuclear forces at an exponential rate," KCNA said.

Kohli out of Afghanistan ODIs with hamstring injury

■ Gaikwad likely to join squad



PTI

New Delhi/Mullanpur, Jun 4: Indian batting superstar Virat Kohli was on Thursday ruled out of the upcoming ODI series against Afghanistan due to a hamstring injury that he sustained during the recently-concluded IPL.

Ruturaj Gaikwad, who was supposed to play for India A in the tri-series in Sri Lanka is likely to be summoned for the rubber in place of Kohli based on his performance during last appearance in ODIs for India.

The three-match series begins on June 13 in Dharamshala.

Kohli suffered the injury during the IPL final that his side Royal Challengers Bengaluru won on Sunday.

"He is out of the ODI series due to a hamstring injury. He got injured during the final. Scans have revealed distal semimembranosus tendon tear," a BCCI source told PTI.

A distal semimembranosus

tendon tear is a rare hamstring injury affecting the thick tendon that attaches a muscle to the inner part of the shinbone, just below the knee.

Kohli, known for his unmatched fitness even at 37 years of age, was in stellar form in the IPL where he steered Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a second consecutive title. He hit the winning runs in the final against Gujarat Titans.

Reinventing his T20 game, Kohli amassed 675 runs in RCB's triumphant campaign including a hundred and five fifty plus scores. Kohli's absence will take the sheen off the upcoming series.

Though the former India captain is now a one-format player, he remains a top draw for fans worldwide. It is extremely rare for Kohli to miss games due to an injury, given his exemplary fitness standards.

It also remains to be seen if Rohit Sharma is available for the whole series against Afghanistan. The opener was included in the

squad subject to fitness after a hamstring injury affected his IPL appearances.

When India's assistant coach Ryan Ten Doeschate was asked about Kohli's injury, he insisted that media should wait for the official updates.

"Official communication will come on that. It's obviously big news when it's someone like Virat or Rohit," Ten Doeschate said.

He also said that Rohit Sharma's hamstring will be assessed before a final call is taken for the one dayers.

"The same protocols will be in place where we'll assess the fitness of those guys and we've got a few days now to decide whether they are fit enough to play and be part of the squad, and make adjustments accordingly. But I'm sure some official communication will come through as soon as the medical team confirms," Ten Doeschate.

Ever since both Kohli and Rohit retired from Tests last year, there has been immense speculation on their ODI future.

The next 50-over World Cup is scheduled in South Africa in October-November 2027 and they would be included in the squad on the basis of their form and fitness leading up to the tournament.

The second ODI against Afghanistan will be played in Lucknow on June 17 followed by the third and final match in Chennai on June 20. The Indian team will have a three-day camp in PCA Stadium Mohali where the ODI specialists have been asked to assemble.

Removing Suryakumar Yadav as T20I captain at this stage may not be right, says MSK Prasad

IANS

New Delhi, June 4: Former India wicketkeeper and chief selector MSK Prasad on Thursday cautioned against removing Suryakumar Yadav as captain of the men's T20I side, saying such a move at this stage would not be the right one and that selectors should instead look to groom younger leaders from now onwards.

Despite a few half-centuries in the bilateral series against New Zealand earlier this year and a match-winning knock in the T20 World Cup opening game against the USA, consistency has eluded Suryakumar. After India won the T20 World Cup under his leadership, Suryakumar's form dipped further in IPL 2026, where he managed only 270 runs in 13 matches at a strike rate of 147.54, with just two fifties.

With India's selectors set to meet in Mumbai on Saturday for selecting squads for the two games against Ireland, to be played on June 26 and 28, followed by five T20Is in England from July 1 to 11, apart from picking India 'A' squad for the two red-ball games against Sri Lanka 'A', Suryakumar's future as the T20I captain will be a hot topic of discussion.

"See, are you sending your first team or are you sending your second level? That's the biggest concern. So, if they are sending the first team, I think overlooking Surya is not the right thing to do because he



just handed over one more Men's T20 World Cup to us.

"So, ideally, probably next 5-6 months or now you have to get ready with your next leaders, right? Axar Patel was your vice-captain till the T20 World Cup win. Ideally, if you look at it, you have to look forward to the younger leaders. So, if you can identify such leaders and make a deputy to Surya, it will be nice to see. Surya is a phenomenal player," Prasad told

IANS in an exclusive conversation on Thursday.

Prasad admitted that Suryakumar has endured a lean patch but urged patience towards him. "I know that he has gone through a rough patch in the last 1-1.5 years. Of course, we have other players like Rajat Patidar coming up, and they also deserve their places. So, what I would like to say is that, removing Surya at this stage, I think, is not the

right signal. Give him a couple of series, and if his lean patch continues, then you have a deputy to whom you can hand over the captaincy baton."

On possible successors of Suryakumar like Shreyas Iyer, the ODI vice-captain, and Hardik Pandya, apart from Sanju Samson, Ishan Kishan, and Tilak Varma in the mix, Prasad said, "See, Hardik is one potential candidate. Then, Shreyas is another potential candidate, too. People like Ishan Kishan, Tilak Verma, and Sanju Samson are also in line.

"See, Sanju has led RR for quite some time. Ishan has led recently, and he showed glimpses of class in his captaincy. Tilak Verma is a potential guy. We think that Tilak Verma is the guy and the answer for the next few years for Indian cricket in T20 formats.

"So, he is not a bad choice, too. Rajat Patidar (who led RCB to back-to-back IPL titles) is also one of those. I don't know whether it's from a captaincy point of view, but he is definitely a guy who should be looked into. So, you have enough ammunition with you. But are you sending your first eleven or are you sending your, maybe, probably the second eleven?"

Shreyas, the frontrunner to succeed Suryakumar, comes with proven captaincy credentials — having led Kolkata Knight Riders to the IPL title in 2024 and guiding Delhi Capitals and Punjab Kings to the finals in 2020 and 2025, respectively.