



Nasha-Mukt Jammu Kashmir Campaign

Rise as protectors of neighbourhoods: LG Sinha tells mothers, sisters & daughters

Says days of narco-terrorists are numbered, their networks will be dismantled

Raja Syed Rather

Ganderbal, Jun 05: Asking mothers, sisters, and daughters to rise as protectors of our villages, cities and neighbourhoods, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday said that days of narco-terrorists are numbered and they will be punished for their sins.

LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) joined 'Nasha-Mukt Jammu Kashmir Campaign' in Ganderbal this morning and also led a Padyatra that was joined by people from all walks of life.

While addressing the gathering, LG Sinha, said, "Mothers, sisters, and daughters have to rise as protectors of our villages, cities and neighbourhoods. Youth of Jammu Kashmir have to become guardians of their schools and colleges."

"I promise to the people that



narco-terrorists will no longer find refuge. We will hunt them down. Narco-Terrorists days are numbered. Their networks will be dismantled, one by one. This is my oath, my solemn promise that every narco-terrorist will answer for their crimes and their sins," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said, "Having now visited every district in Kashmir Valley & stood with each march, I can say that a historic movement against narco-terrorism has risen."

He said in the past 55 days, 1,036 FIRs have been registered, 1,128 drug smugglers have been arrested, more than 100 properties of | [More on P10](#)

LG inaugurates Emergency Operations Centre, Amarnath Yatra Control Room

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 05: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday inaugurated District Emergency Operations Centre and Shri Amarnathji Yatra Control Room at the Deputy Commissioner's Office, Ganderbal. He said these facilities will ensure a smooth and seamless pilgrimage experience for the upcoming Shri Amarnathji Yatra.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore briefed the Lieutenant Governor on the key features of the new facility.



The centre pools CCTV feeds from across Ganderbal district installed by District Administration, Police and other Security forces, for real-time monitoring at a single centralized location. | [More on P10](#)

LG inaugurates Yatri Bhawan at Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple



KT News Desk

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday inaugurated Yatri Bhawan at Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple, Tulmulla, Ganderbal. After dedicating the facilities to the public, the LG said the new Yatri Bhawan will substantially

improve the pilgrimage experience at Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple by providing safe, hygienic and comfortable accommodation facilities. Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple at Tulmulla is one of the most revered shrines in Jammu Kashmir. Located approximately 25 km from Srinagar and 5 km from | [More on P10](#)

World Environment Day

Committed to greener, climate-resilient J&K: CM

Plants sapling at J&K House, New Delhi

KT News Desk

New Delhi, Jun 05: On the occasion of World Environment Day, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah planted a sapling at Jammu & Kashmir House, New Delhi, marking the Government's continued commitment to environmental sustainability and green development.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that every tree planted today is an investment in cleaner air, healthier communities, and a more resilient tomorrow. He emphasized that such efforts, though symbolic, carry long-term



significance in addressing the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation. Reaffirming the government's commitment on World Environment Day, the Chief Minister | [More on P10](#)

Gilgit-Baltistan, J&K, Ladakh integral parts of India: MEA

India lodges strong protest over Pak's plan to hold elections in GB

KNO News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 05: India on Friday lodged a strong protest against Pakistan's decision to hold elections in Gilgit-Baltistan, asserting that the region forms an integral part of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and remains under Pakistan's illegal occupation.

Responding to media queries, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including Gilgit-Baltistan, are an inseparable part of India by virtue of

the legal accession of the erstwhile princely state in 1947. Pertinently, Pakistan is scheduled to hold elections to the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly on June 7. The assembly comprises 33 seats, including reserved seats for women and technocrats.

"The Government of India categorically rejects any attempts by Pakistan to bring material changes to areas under its illegal and forcible occupation," the MEA said in a statement.

The ministry maintained that such exercises cannot alter India's position regarding the territory and urged Pakistan to vacate the areas under its

control. New Delhi also accused Islamabad of attempting to divert attention from what it described as serious concerns in the region, including alleged political repression, economic exploitation and violations of fundamental rights.

According to the MEA, electoral processes or administrative measures undertaken by Pakistan in the occupied territories do not change the legal status of these regions.

India has consistently opposed elections and constitutional changes undertaken by Pakistan in territories it claims as part of the | [More on P10](#)

Art 370 abrogation biggest policy mistake: CM Omar

Seeks immediate restoration of statehood

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 05: Asserting that restoration of statehood remains the biggest political demand of the people of the Union Territory, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said Jammu and Kashmir chose to be part of India in 1947.

He said the people of Jammu and Kashmir have repeatedly demonstrated their faith in democracy, rejected violence and continue to seek accountable governance along with restoration of their constitutional and democratic rights.

Speaking at The Hindu Huddle 2026 in Bengaluru, Omar, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), termed the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 as the "biggest policy mistake" made by the Government of India.

Responding to questions on India-Pakistan relations and Kashmir's role in the geopolitical landscape, Omar said Jammu and Kashmir remains central to tensions between the two countries.

"Pakistan wants us. We are



a part of India. We chose to be a part of India. That was something they couldn't accept and still are unable to accept," he said.

He said while the people of J&K are directly affected by India-Pakistan relations, they are rarely consulted in the dialogue process.

"We are, for want of a better phrase, the elephant in the room," he said.

Referring to the security situation, Omar said last year's incidents in Pahalgam showed that militancy and violence cannot be taken lightly.

"We became complacent about the security situation. We thought the dark days of militancy where innocent people would | [More on P10](#)

Omar for stronger J&K-Karnataka cooperation



KT News Desk

Bengaluru, Jun 05: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday met Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on the sidelines of an event in Bengaluru and congratulated him on assuming office as the Chief Minister of

Karnataka.

The two leaders met during The Hindu Huddle, where Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also participated in a discussion session.

Congratulating Chief Minister Shivakumar on his elevation, Omar Abdullah wished him | [More on P10](#)

Amarnath Yatra

Police launch 'Pahchan App' to enhance security of pilgrims, tourists

Umair Gull Ganie

Anantnag, Jun 05: To enhance the safety and security of pilgrims and tourists during the forthcoming Amarnath Yatra, Anantnag Police launched the 'Pahchan App', a QR code-based mobile application aimed at registering and verifying service providers operating along the Yatra route and at major tourist destinations.

A police officer explained to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the application has been developed to register and regulate



service providers associated with the Yatra and the tourism sector.

"The application enables instant, on-the-spot verification

of service providers and creates a secure ecosystem by clearly distinguishing registered and verified individuals from unregistered ones," he said.

The officer said the primary objective of the initiative is to strengthen the security grid during the Yatra by preventing the entry of unverified or anti-social elements in the guise of service providers.

"By creating a digital record of all authorised persons, the app brings greater transparency and accountability to the services offered to pilgrims and tourists," he added.

The application would also facilitate better crowd management by ensuring organised and regulated service delivery. | [More on P10](#)

DGP launches tree plantation drive

KNO Desk

Srinagar, Jun 05: Director General of Police (DGP), Jammu and Kashmir, Nalin Prabhat on Friday launched a tree plantation campaign in south Kashmir's Anantnag on the occasion of World Environment Day, reaffirming the police department's commitment towards environmental conservation and sustainable development.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the campaign was



inaugurated with the plantation of a deodar sapling (Cedrus deodara), symbolising the importance of preserving nature and increasing | [More on P10](#)

Sgr man's body recovered after 6 days

KNO Correspondent

Anantnag, Jun 05: The body of a Srinagar man, who was swept away while attempting to rescue his son in the Lidder River near Pahalgam, was retrieved from the Aishmuqam area on Friday, six days after the incident.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the body of Muhammad Ashraf Mir (42), a resident of Jawahar Nagar, Srinagar, was recovered from the Amad, Aishmuqam area following an extensive search operation.

He said, Mir had gone missing on Sunday after entering the Lidder River near Langanbal, around eight kilometres downstream of Pahalgam, in an attempt to save his teenage son, Fahad, during a family outing.

The official said the boy survived the incident.

He said a massive search operation involving personnel from the SDRF, NDRF, Police, Army, Civil Defence volunteers and local residents was launched immediately after the incident.

"Search teams continued combing various stretches of the river downstream from the spot where Mir was last seen before his body was finally traced and recovered on Friday," the official said.

Meanwhile, | [More on P10](#)

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Climate change, unsustainable activities threatening Kashmir's fragile ecosystems: Experts

'Glacier retreat, water insecurity, biodiversity loss interconnected; environmental protection now a responsibility'

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jun 05: On the occasion of World Environment Day, prominent environmental experts and academicians from Jammu and Kashmir stressed the urgent need to safeguard the region's fragile ecosystems, warning that climate change and unsustainable human activities are posing serious

threats to the Himalayan environment and the livelihoods dependent upon it.

Professor Shakeel Ahmad Romshoo, distinguished Earth scientist, glaciologist and Vice-Chancellor of the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said World Environment Day serves as a



reminder of the profound environmental challenges confronting the Indian Himalayan region, including Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the region is facing multiple interconnected challenges such as climate change, glacier retreat, water insecurity, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, all of which threaten environmental

stability and sustainable development.

"World Environment Day reminds us of the profound environmental challenges confronting the Indian Himalaya, including Jammu and Kashmir. These challenges are deeply interconnected and require solutions that are rooted in science and guided by sustainability," he said. | [More on P10](#)

CS calls for ambitious implementation of Agri Credit Schemes across J&K

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JUNE 05: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo chaired a review meeting of the Agriculture Production Department (APD) on Friday to assess the implementation and progress of various agricultural credit schemes being extended across the districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, APD, Dr Ashish Chandra Verma; Managing Director, HADP; Directors of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Horticulture and Fisheries from both Jammu and Kashmir divisions, while Deputy Commissioners participated through video conferencing.

Reviewing the performance of different credit-linked schemes, the Chief Secretary emphasized the need for giving a major push to agricultural financing, observing that accessible and affordable credit remains the most effective means of unlocking the vast potential of the agriculture and allied sectors in Jammu and Kashmir.

He called upon the district administrations and banking institutions to pursue these schemes with greater ambition and commitment so that eligible farmers, entrepreneurs and producer groups are able to derive maximum benefit from them.

Highlighting the significance of the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme, Dulloo stressed the need for saturation of KCC coverage, timely renewal of existing accounts and prompt disbursement of repayment incentives to eligible farmers in accordance with the scheme guidelines.

He directed the concerned departments and banks to undertake extensive awareness campaigns regarding the incentives available under the scheme and the conditions required for availing them, enabling farmers to fully leverage the benefits of this credit scheme.

The Chief Secretary also called for expediting onboarding under the Unified Lending Interface (ULI) in areas where digitization of land records has been completed. He further directed the concerned



authorities to ensure that these records remain updated in tandem with the ongoing generation of Farmer IDs across the districts.

Emphasizing the role of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) in strengthening rural economies, Dulloo underscored the need for systematic capacity building of FPOs to make them credit-worthy and financially sustainable. He asked the department to designate mentors from among its trainers for handholding and guiding FPOs in enhancing their productivity and institutional capacities in line with banking requirements and credit norms.

The Chief Secretary reviewed district-wise and scheme-wise performance and urged districts to identify areas where progress remained below expectations and undertake focused interventions to improve outcomes and emerge as leading performers.

The meeting also reviewed the performance of Agricultural Term Loans and the activities generating the highest demand among applicants. The Chief Secretary directed banks to provide granular activity-wise data regarding the sectors attracting maximum credit demand and explore the possibility of incorporating such activities under the Mission YUVA framework as well.

Speaking on the occasion, Additional Chief Secretary, APD, Dr. Ashish Chandra Verma presented a comprehensive

overview of the agricultural credit ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir. He highlighted the uptake of various schemes among eligible beneficiaries, discussed the challenges being faced and outlined the roadmap for achieving the desired outcomes.

During the meeting, it was informed that Jammu and Kashmir presently has around 11.57 lakh active KCC account holders, of whom nearly 3.5 lakh farmers availed the prompt repayment incentive during the previous financial year. It was further revealed that 7.99 lakh beneficiaries have been provided smart cards, while 41 per cent coverage under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) was achieved during the Kharif season.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of major schemes including the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF), PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME), HADP Credit, JKICP Credit, National Livestock Mission (NLM) and PM-KISAN.

It was informed that under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, loans amounting to 680 Cr have been sanctioned, while 431 Cr has been disbursed among 392 beneficiaries across Jammu and Kashmir.

Similarly, under PMFME, 545 cases involving disbursement of 22 Cr were reported during 2024-25. Under HADP Credit, loans worth

302.78 Cr have been sanctioned, of which 172.69 Cr have been disbursed up to May 2026.

Regarding the National Livestock Mission, the meeting was apprised that 132 applications had been received, out of which 65 cases are presently under processing by banks, while 27 cases involving financial assistance of Rs 12.23 Cr have been approved by the Central Executive Committee (CEC).

The review further revealed that under FPO financing, credit amounting to Rs 604 Cr has been sanctioned in favour of 67 FPOs, of which Rs 425 Cr has been disbursed among 54 FPOs across the Union Territory.

With regard to the flagship PM-KISAN scheme, the meeting was informed that Jammu and Kashmir currently has around 9.16 lakh active beneficiaries. It was further noted that land seeding has been completed in a substantial number of cases, while NPCI and e-KYC pendencies have been reduced considerably and are being addressed on priority.

The meeting was also informed that the forthcoming "Khet Bachao Abhiyan" would be extensively utilized as a platform to reach every village of the Union Territory and generate awareness among farmers regarding the benefits of various agricultural credit schemes, alongside dissemination of the campaign's broader objectives aimed at strengthening the agriculture sector.

Soil Scientists meet held at Srinagar to promote climate-resilient soil management



KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, June 5: The Central Sericulture Research & Training Institute (CSB-CSR&TI), Pampore, under the Central Silk Board, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, organized the Soil Scientists Meet 2026 at NIFT, Srinagar, in hybrid mode, commemorating the World Environment Day 2026.

The event, as per a PIB statement, organized under the theme "Soil Health for Silk: Strategies for Sustainable Sericulture," brought together leading soil scientists, researchers, academicians, policymakers, and stakeholders to deliberate on the challenges posed by climate change and their implications for soil health, productivity, and sustainable sericulture.

Welcoming the participants, Dr. Sakthivel N., Director, CSR&TI Pampore, highlighted the vital role of soil health in strengthening sericulture ecosystems. He also acknowledged the support and guidance of the Member Secretary, Central Silk Board, in organising the event.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. S. Manthira Moorthy, Director (Technical), Central Silk Board, Bengaluru, emphasized the need for integrated soil management practices and scientific innovations to strengthen the sustainability of the sericulture sector. Ajaz Ahmad Bhat, IAS, Director, Sericulture Development Department, Jammu &

Kashmir, underscored the importance of region-specific interventions for enhancing soil productivity and farmer livelihoods.

In his virtual address, P. Sivakumar, IFS, Member Secretary & CEO, Central Silk Board, Bengaluru, stressed the need for collaborative research and technology-driven solutions to take care of soil by strengthening climate resilience and sustainability in sericulture production systems.

A major highlight of the event was the release of the book titled "Climate Resilient Sericulture in India: Challenges, Impacts and Adaptation Strategies" by the distinguished dignitaries present on the occasion. The publication is expected to serve as an important reference document for researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders working towards climate adaptation in sericulture.

As part of the World Environment Day celebrations, a Plantation Drive was organized to reinforce the commitment towards environmental conservation, ecological restoration, and sustainable development. The initiative witnessed enthusiastic participation from scientists, officials and stakeholders.

The meet concluded with discussions on measures to strengthen soil health, enhance climate resilience and ensure the long-term sustainability of the sericulture sector.

KU begins international conference on climate action, sustainability, literature

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar June 05: The Department of English, University of Kashmir (KU), commenced a two-day international conference on "Climate Action, Sustainability and Literature: The Ecological Proximity in the Contemporary Anthropocentric Epoch" in collaboration with the Ecological Foundation for the Study of Literature and Environment at the Main Campus.

The conference, as per a KU statement, aims to examine the intersections of literature, environmental thought and sustainability, while promoting interdisciplinary dialogue on climate change, ecological responsibility and the role of the humanities in addressing contemporary environmental challenges.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Vice-Chancellor KU, Prof. Nilofer Khan, highlighted the importance of academic engagement with pressing ecological concerns.

"Climate change is no longer a distant possibility but a lived reality. Universities have a responsibility to encourage critical reflection and generate knowledge that contributes to environmental awareness, sustainable practices and informed public discourse," she said.

added that literature and the humanities offer valuable perspectives for understanding the human dimensions

of environmental crises and can play a meaningful role in shaping ecological consciousness.

-Chancellor, Islamic University of Science and Technology, Prof. Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, in his address, highlighted the need for integrating scientific understanding with policy interventions and governance frameworks to address the challenges posed by climate change. He emphasized that sustainable development requires coordinated efforts involving academia, policymakers, communities and institutions working towards long-term environmental resilience.

Academic Affairs KU, Prof. Shariefuddin Pirzada, emphasized the significance of interdisciplinary research and academic collaborations in advancing discussions on sustainability and environmental stewardship. President, EFSLE, Dr. Rishikesh Kumar, spoke about the growing relevance of ecopsychological approaches in literary and cultural studies.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Head, Department of English KU, Prof. Mufti Mudasir Farooqi, outlined the objectives of the conference and said the event seeks to create a platform for scholars, researchers and practitioners to deliberate on contemporary ecological issues through literary, cultural and interdisciplinary perspectives.

World Environment Day 2026: Exhibition organized at GCOE Srinagar



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JUNE 05: Government College of Education, Institute of Advanced Studies in Education (GCOE-IASE), M.A. Road, Srinagar, organized a "Trash to Treasure" Exhibition on the occasion of World Environment Day 2026.

The event, as per an official statement, was jointly organized by the Department of Environmental Studies (EVS) and the NSS Units of the college at the Front Park.

The exhibition featured innovative and creative items prepared by B.Ed. 1st Semester and UG 4th Semester students using waste and discarded materials. Through their exhibits, the students highlighted the importance of waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and sustainable living practices.

Prof. (Dr.) Seema Naz, Principal GCOE-IASE Srinagar, visited the exhibition stalls and interacted with

the participating students. She highly appreciated their creativity, innovation, and commitment to environmental conservation. Emphasizing the importance of sustainable living, she encouraged students to adopt eco-friendly practices in their daily lives and to become responsible ambassadors of environmental protection within their communities. She also commended the efforts of the Department of Environmental Studies and NSS Units for organizing the exhibition and providing students with a meaningful platform to showcase their talents while promoting environmental awareness.

The event aimed to promote environmental awareness and encourage eco-friendly practices among the college community. It also served as a platform for students to demonstrate how waste materials can be transformed into useful and artistic products,

reinforcing the message of responsible resource management and sustainability.

The exhibition received an enthusiastic response from students and faculty members and successfully conveyed the significance of environmental stewardship, responsible waste management, and sustainable living.

Among the faculty members present on the occasion were Dr. Altaf Shah Syed (NSS Programme Officer), Dr. Shawana Manzoor (Department of Environmental Studies), Dr. Ab. Gani Kumar (Department of Education), Dr. Lateef Shah (Department of Education), Dr. Abdul Rashid (Department of History), Dr. Irfat Khan (Department of Psychology), Dr. Aijaz Ahmad Dar (Department of Geography), Dr. Gousia Nisar (Department of Education), Dr. Shabeena (Department of English), Dr. Syed Shabana Shabir (Department of Hindi), along with other faculty members.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT
CIVIL SECRETARIAT J&K,

Subject: Constitution of Committee for Implementation of the Jammu and Kashmir MSME Health Clinic-Nomination of Nodal Department
Government Order No.:1009-JK (GAD) of 2026
Dated:22.05.2026

In continuation of Government Order No. 912-1K(GAD) of 2026 dated 14.05.2026. It is hereby ordered that Labour & Employment Department shall be the Nodal Department for the committee for implementation of the Jammu and Kashmir MSME Health Clinic in the Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

The Nodal Department shall-

- i. Provide administrative support and facilitation for effective functioning of the Committee.
- ii. Coordinate the meetings and ensure timely follow-up on the decisions of the Committee.
- iii. Monitor progress of the initiative and implementation of the action plans and reforms recommended by the Committee.
- iv. Oversee development of the institutional framework, digital platforms, monitoring mechanisms and capacity- building initiatives under the MSME Health Clinic programme.

By Order of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sd/-
(M. Raja) LAS
Commissioner/Secretary to the Government

DIPK-1864/26 DATED: 05-06-2026
No. GAD-ADM01V/83/2026-09-GAD Dated:22.051026

GOVERNMENT DENTAL COLLEGE & HOSPITAL
SHIREEN BAGH, SRINAGAR

EMAIL ADDRESS: gdc.srinagar@jk.gov.in
PHONE NO: 0194 – 2504701, 0194 – 2504702.
FAX NO: 0194 – 2504703.

NOTICE

This is for information of all the candidates who have applied for House Job advertised vide No.GDC/Estt/Notification/HJ/File-2025/e file-85(2022-02)/3898-3910 dated: 13-05-2026 that the written examination for House Job will be conducted on 12-06-2026 at 03:00 P.M in the Auditorium Block of Government Dental College & Hospital, Srinagar subject to the following conditions: -

1. That sitting in the written examination is provisionally subject to verification of all parameters as required.
2. Place of Examination Centre will be notified before the date of examination.
3. Candidates are advised to straight away proceed to their notified examination center without making any assembly in the College campus.
4. No personal belongings shall be allowed in the examination Hall which includes smart watches, Cell phones, electronic gadgets, handbags etc.
5. Candidates will carry blue or black ball point pen only.
6. Candidates shall bring acknowledgement card along with on the day of examination download at the time of submission of application form.

[Prof. (Dr.) Sandeep Kaur Bali],
Principal/Dean,
Govt. Dental College & Hospital,
Srinagar.

No:- GDC/Estt/HJ/File-2024/e-file-85/ 2022-02/4485-97 Dated:-05-06-2026
DIPK-1870/26 DATED: 05-06-2026

Govt focused on identifying, developing offbeat tourism landscape: Sakeena Itoo

KT NEWS DESK

Kulgam, June 05: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo on Friday chaired a meeting at Civil Secretariat here to review the tourism potential of the picturesque Panchanpatri area in Kulgam district.

During the meeting, the Minister took detailed assessment of various measures to be taken for bringing the Panchanpatri area of Kulgam on tourism map of Jammu and Kashmir. She directed the officers to establish all kind basic amenities in this picturesque area so that maximum visitors are attracted towards it.

The Minister directed the Tourism department to assess the scope for strengthening tourism infrastructure in the area for visitors. "Panchanpatri possesses immense natural beauty and holds tremendous potential to emerge as a major



attraction for nature lovers, trekkers and adventure tourists", she stated.

Sakeena Itoo highlighted that the Government is focused on identifying and developing offbeat destinations to diversify the tourism landscape of Jammu and Kashmir and generate new livelihood opportunities for local communities.

"Promotion of unexplored tourist spots not only

enhances visitor experiences but also contributes significantly to rural economic growth through employment generation and entrepreneurship", she stated.

Reaffirming the Government's vision for inclusive tourism development, Sakeena Itoo said that emerging destinations like Panchanpatri will play a vital role in strengthening Jammu and Kashmir's position

as a premier tourist destination and creating long-term economic benefits for local residents.

During the meeting, Joint Director Tourism Kashmir briefed the Minister about ongoing and proposed tourism initiatives in the Panchanpatri.

The meeting, among others, was attended by Joint Director Tourism Kashmir; senior officers of Tourism and other concerned departments.

Mehbooba's letter 'politically motivated': Tanvir Sadiq

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jun 05: National Conference (NC) Chief Spokesperson and MLA Zadibal, Tanvir Sadiq on Friday questioned the intent behind Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti's recent letter to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, alleging that the move was politically motivated.

Speaking with reporters here, Sadiq defended the NC's outreach to New Delhi over restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, saying the party was only reminding the Centre of commitments made to the people of J&K.

"When we do something, we clearly say why we are doing it, and when we don't do something, we also explain why. We went to Delhi on the very first day to remind the Prime Minister, Home Minister and the Supreme Court about the promises made to the people of Jammu and Kashmir regarding statehood," he said.

Sadiq termed the NC's initiative a "joint programme of the people" and said elected representatives had every right to raise public concerns before the Centre.

He welcomed support from Muf-ti Nasir-ul-Islam, saying it reflected the aspirations of the people who want their elected representatives to engage with New Delhi on J&K's



political issues.

Targeting opposition parties, the NC Chief Spokesperson accused them of trying to politicise every move made by the government.

"Unfortunately, some opposition parties only want headlines and brownie points. Every positive step is turned into negative politics because they feel politics is slipping out of their hands," he said.

Referring to Mehbooba Mufti's letter to CM Abdullah, the NC MLA said the matter should not have been taken to social media if the intention was genuine dialogue.

"If you speak to the Chief Minister and he says he will meet you on Monday, then what was the need to put the letter on social media? That itself shows what kind of politics is being played," he said.

On Congress's reactions to the NC's statehood campaign, Sadiq said there was no contradiction between the alliance partners and claimed the outreach had been carried out after discussions with Congress leadership. "This has happened after consultations with Congress leadership. There is no contradiction between Congress and the National Conference," he said.

Reacting to criticism that the NC's Delhi outreach was aimed at sidelining the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), he said some of the parties raising objections had themselves walked away from the alliance earlier. "This is not about politics or which party gets credit. It is about translating the emotions and mandate of the people of Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

NC integral part of INDIA bloc: Dr Farooq

Party to attend June 8 meeting



REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jun 05: National Conference (NC) president, Dr Farooq Abdullah on Friday said his party is an integral part of the INDIA bloc and will "certainly participate" in the opposition alliance meeting scheduled for June 8. Speaking to reporters here, Dr Abdullah said either he or Chief Minister Omar Abdullah would attend the meeting on behalf of the party.

"Omar and I—one of us will go. Obviously, we are part of that. We will be there," he said. The NC chief

reiterated his party's stand on Article 370, saying its fate is closely tied to the aspirations and identity of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. "The day we are buried, Kashmir will be buried, Article 370 will be buried," Dr Farooq said.

The former chief minister's remarks came days after the National Conference announced plans to hold a protest in New Delhi during the upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament, seeking restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and raising demands for constitutional safeguards—(KNO)

Mehbooba visits AIIMS Awantipora

Says it was dream of her father

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Awantipora, Jun 05: A political war of words erupted over the prestigious AIIMS Awantipora project on Friday after Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti visited the under-construction institute and described it as the realization of a dream envisioned by her late father. During her visit to the AIIMS site in Awantipora, Mehbooba Mufti expressed satisfaction over the pace of construction and said the institute would emerge as a landmark healthcare facility for the entire Union Territory.

"I am delighted to visit the site here in Awantipora where the AIIMS is being constructed. This was a dream of my father," Mehbooba said while speaking to reporters at the site.

She acknowledged that the project had witnessed delays over the years due to various



reasons but noted that construction work was now moving ahead steadily.

"Although there were some delays, the work is now progressing well. I have assured the team that I will provide whatever support is needed, even if it means taking up the matter with the Union Health Minister," she said.

The PDP chief said AIIMS Awantipora would become a model healthcare and medical education institution not

only for Kashmir but for the entire Jammu and Kashmir region.

"This institute will serve as a model for the whole region. The location itself is stunning and peaceful. I believe patients coming here will experience a sense of comfort and well-being in such an environment," she added. The visit, however, drew a sharp response from Health Minister Sakina Itoo, who questioned the purpose and authority under which

former rulers were conducting reviews of government projects. In a post on X, Itoo, without naming Mehbooba Mufti, said some political leaders appeared to be suffering from "political amnesia" and continued to behave as though they were still in power despite being out of office since 2018.

"Some people seem to be suffering from political amnesia. They still behave as if they are in power, even though they lost office in 2018 and have since been repeatedly rejected by the people," she said.

The minister emphasized that Jammu and Kashmir currently has an elected government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and questioned in what capacity former rulers were reviewing the AIIMS project.

"The elected government today is led by Hon'ble

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Sajad Lone terms Mehbooba's AIIMS meet a 'Constitutional Crisis'

KNO

Srinagar, Jun 05: Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Conference President and MLA Handwara, Sajad Lone, on Friday raised a clarion call and criticism over PDP president and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti chairing a review meeting at AIIMS, terming the development a "constitutional crisis" and questioning the authority under which such a meeting was conducted.

In a strongly-worded statement, Lone said the episode represented yet another instance of institutional disempowerment in Jammu and Kashmir and accused the present administration of remaining silent despite what he



described as a direct challenge to the constitutional competencies of the elected government.

"Irony does a thousand deaths today on Kashmiri politics," Lone remarked, expressing surprise that a former chief minister had presided over a review meeting of an institution functioning under the Union Government.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Blaze destroys 3 houses in Rainawari

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jun 05: Three residential houses were damaged in a devastating fire incident at Kalwal Mohalla, Rainawari here on late Thursday night, leaving several families homeless and in distress.

Eyewitnesses and local residents said that the fire broke out suddenly during the night when most residents were asleep.

"We were downstairs when suddenly flames appeared. Within minutes the fire spread rapidly and people started running out of their homes in panic," Bashir Ahmed local resident said.

Nazir Ahmad, another local said women and children were crying as neighbours rushed to rescue the families and shift household items to safety.

Similarly, residents said the narrow lanes and congested locality added to the panic, while locals joined firefighters in preventing the flames from spreading further.

Officials said the Fire and

Emergency Services personnel, assisted by police and local volunteers, launched an immediate firefighting operation and managed to bring the blaze under control after strenuous efforts.

The incident caused damage to three houses, while household goods, bedding, clothes and other valuables were reduced to ashes, locals said. He added the partial damage was also done by the water.

Meanwhile, the affected families appealed to the administration and civil society to provide financial assistance and rehabilitation support, saying they have lost most of their belongings in the fire incident.

"We appeal to the government and kind-hearted people to help these families rebuild their homes and lives. They are in urgent need of support," Mubashir a local resident said.

Meanwhile, MLA Zadibal Tanvir Sadiq visited the affected area on Friday and met the families affected by the blaze. "Visited Kalwal Mohalla,

Rainawari and met the families affected by the devastating fire incident last night. My heart goes out to them during this difficult time," Sadiq said. He said he spoke with Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo and requested immediate assistance for the victims. "I have requested that every possible assistance be extended to the affected families. I am personally arranging immediate essential relief and will also provide the maximum permissible assistance from my Constituency Development Fund for fire victims," he said.

Appealing for solidarity and community support, Sadiq said such difficult moments require collective efforts from society. "At times like these, we must stand together as a community. I appeal to everyone to come forward and support these families in whatever way possible," he added.

He also appreciated the efforts of Fire & Emergency Services personnel, police and local residents for their timely response in preventing further damage—(KNO)

True success of plantations lies in sapling survival: ADG CRPF

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jun 05: Stressing that environmental conservation requires sustained commitment beyond symbolic campaigns, Additional Director General (ADG) CRPF J&K Zone, Rajesh Kumar on Friday said the true success of plantation drives lies not merely in planting saplings but in ensuring their survival and healthy growth.

During a large-scale plantation drive organised by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) across Central Kashmir to mark World Environment Day, officials said that CRPF units deployed in Srinagar, Budgam and Ganderbal districts, along with the Group Centre and Sector Headquarters at Nishat, participated in the campaign aimed at promoting environmental sustainability and strengthening ecological



balance. Officials said nearly 3,000 saplings of various indigenous and environment-friendly species were planted during the programme to enhance green cover, restore ecological health and promote biodiversity across the region.

They said similar plantation drives were organised by CRPF formations across the country, highlighting the importance of sustainable environmental practices for holistic development and the vision of "Viksit Bharat."

The main plantation drive was conducted at Group Centre

CRPF Srinagar under the guidance of Rajesh Kumar, IPS, Additional Director General, CRPF J&K Zone, in the presence of Pawan Kumar Sharma, Inspector General, CRPF Srinagar Sector, besides senior officers, subordinate officers and jawans of the force.

Addressing the gathering, the dignitaries highlighted growing environmental challenges and stressed the need for collective efforts towards afforestation and environmental conservation.

Kumar said the effectiveness of plantation campaigns

should be measured by the survival and maintenance of saplings rather than by numbers alone. He stressed the importance of regular watering, protection and monitoring of newly planted saplings to achieve long-term environmental conservation goals.

"CRPF would continue such plantation drives in future as part of its sustained commitment towards environmental protection and sustainable development," he said.

Officials said CRPF officers, subordinate officers and jawans deployed across Central Kashmir enthusiastically participated in the programme, reflecting the force's commitment not only towards ensuring internal security but also towards protecting the environment and contributing positively to society.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

EDITORIAL

Life-Saving Medicines Cannot Wait

A responsive and well-monitored supply system is the backbone of any functional public healthcare network. Without it, hospitals become empty shells, doctors become helpless, and patients suffer. The core mandate of a medical supplies corporation is simple yet critical: ensure uninterrupted availability of quality medicines, surgical consumables, diagnostic supplies, and medical equipment in government healthcare institutions. When this supply chain fails, patients pay the price. The reality

on the ground is often grim. Hospitals across regions face chronic shortages of essential drugs, particularly in remote, rural, and underserved areas. Diagnostic machines lie uninstalled for months. Life-saving medicines go out of stock. Patients are turned away or forced to buy from private pharmacies at exorbitant rates. This is a betrayal of public trust. The root causes are not mysterious. Procurement delays, weak vendor oversight, poor inventory management, and a lack of real-time tracking all contribute

to the crisis. When contracts are awarded without strict timelines, when defaulting vendors face no consequences, and when buffer stocks are not maintained, the system collapses. Technology-driven monitoring tools and digital inventory systems exist, but they remain underutilised. Accurate record-keeping and data-driven decision-making are still aspirations rather than realities. The solution requires urgent action. Procurement and delivery must adhere to strict timelines. Vendor performance

must be monitored rigorously, with penalties for non-compliance. Buffer stocks of essential drugs must be maintained at all times. Quality control procedures must be reinforced at every stage, from procurement to storage to final delivery. Regular quality audits and laboratory testing cannot be skipped. Hospital administrators must coordinate closely with supply agencies to ensure timely procurement and distribution. Digital tracking systems must be fully utilised for real-time monitoring

of medicines and equipment. Monthly reporting on essential medical tests can help identify gaps, but reports are not the goal. Patient care is. Accessibility, affordability, and quality of healthcare are not mere slogans. They are the foundation of a just society. Every delay in procurement, every shortage of medicine, every piece of equipment lying unused is a failure of the system. Life-saving medicines cannot wait. Patients cannot wait. And the system cannot afford to fail them.

The Middle Class Journey: Progress Powered By Policy

Press Information Bureau

India's socio-economic story is changing, and at its heart stands a growing, confident middle class. Once defined by careful spending and limited choices, middle-class families today are experiencing greater security, opportunity, and aspiration. Over the past 12 years, reforms in taxation, healthcare, housing, digital services, infrastructure, education, and entrepreneurship have made everyday life more affordable and convenient.

The Changing Face of India's Middle Class

Between 2009 and 2017, the global middle-class population expanded from 1.8 billion to 3.5 billion, with about 40% in Asia, driven significantly by India and China. India's GDP per capita grew by 53% between 2011 and 2019, while the Indian middle class expanded at 6.3% annually between 1995 and 2021, now comprising about 31% of the population.

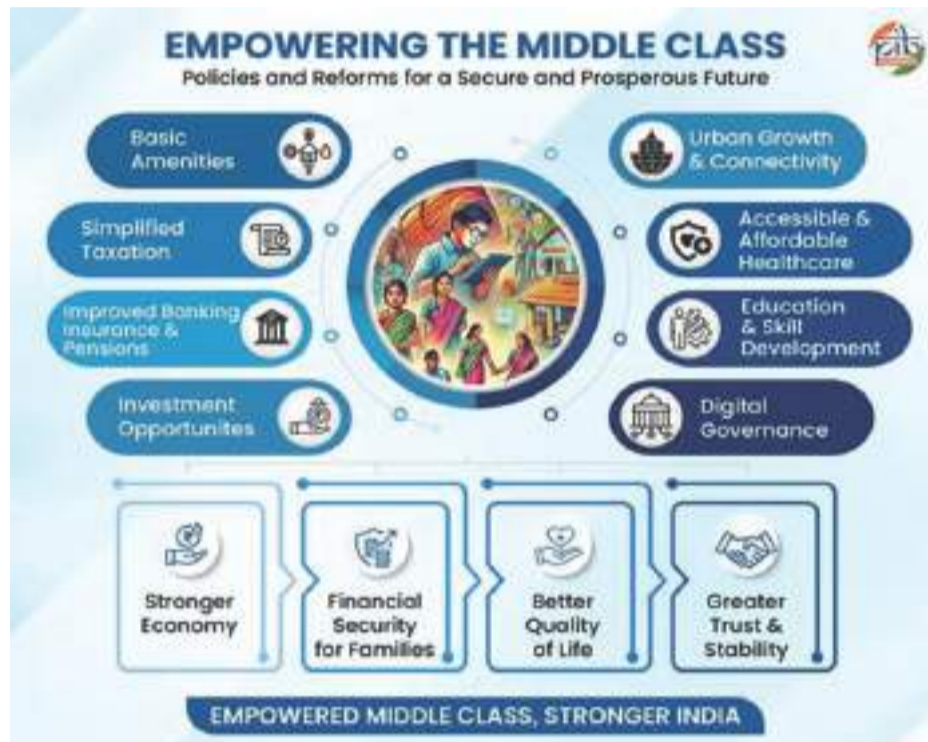
The OECD predicts that between 2030 and 2035, India will overtake China in middle-class population in absolute terms. The World Economic Forum notes that 93% of urban consumer growth is expected outside India's top five cities, with nearly 500 "consumer cities" likely to emerge. By 2036, India's middle class and affluent consumers will account for 93% of all spending, up from 80% in 2026.

Strengthening the Middle Class: 12 Years of Transformative Governance

Taxation Reforms
In July 2024, the Government announced a comprehensive review of the Income Tax Act, 1961, completed in record time with the Income Tax Act, 2025 coming into effect in April 2026. In 2014, individuals with income up to 2.5 lakh paid zero tax. Now, individuals earning up to 12 lakh annually (12.75 lakh for salaried persons) pay zero tax under the new regime introduced in 2023.

The Goods and Services Tax (GST), introduced in July 2017, unified multiple central and state taxes into a single system. The GST taxpayer base grew from 66.5 lakh in 2017 to 1.64 crore by April 2026.

Pension and Insurance
The Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), effective since April 2025, guarantees a minimum



pension of 10,000 per month after retirement (with at least 10 years of service). The share of insurance and pension funds in household finances rose from 28.6% in FY 2018-19 to 29.6% in FY 2024-25.

Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana has recorded 26.88 crore enrolments, while **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana** has seen 57.11 crore enrolments. **Ayushman Bharat** has enabled 43.52 crore health cards. The **Employees' State Insurance Scheme** covers 3.24 crore employees, benefiting ~14.91 crore individuals.

Lower Loan Rates
Home loan interest rates declined from 9.5-10.5% in 2015 to 7.35-8.75% in 2025. The repo rate reduced from 8% in 2015 to 5.25% in 2026. Personal loan rates dropped from 14.25% (2014) to 12.5% (2026), while education loan rates reduced from 14.25% to 9.4%.

Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)
Launched in April 2015, PMMY provides collateral-free loans up to 20 lakh. As of March 2026, it has disbursed over 57 crore loans amounting to 40.07 lakh crore.

Housing
Under PMAY-U 2.0 (launched September 2024), out of 125.31 lakh sanctioned houses, 98.1 lakh have been completed (May 2026) – a growth of 1,120% against the 8.04 lakh houses built between 2005-14. The SWAMIH fund has completed over 58,000 homes across 146 projects since 2019.

Metro Rail Expansion
India now has the world's third-largest metro network. Metro expansion has accelerated from 0.68 km per month before 2014 to nearly 6 km today. The number of cities with metro services grew from 5 in 2014 to 26 in 2025, while daily ridership increased from 28

lakh to over 1.15 crore.
Railways Expansion
Budgetary support for Indian Railways increased from 32,000 crore in 2014-15 to 2.78 lakh crore in FY 2025-26. High-speed rail tracks expanded from 5,036 km in 2014 to 23,713 km in 2026. Passenger journeys increased from 716 crore in 2024-25 to 741 crore in 2025-26.

Airports Expansion
Operational airports increased from 74 in 2014 to 165 in 2026, with over 1.4 lakh crore invested. The UDAN scheme has connected 665 routes, serving over 164 lakh passengers since 2016.

Basic Amenities
Tap water connections increased from 3.23 crore in 2019 to 15.85 crore in May 2026 – over 390% rise. Waste processing rose from nearly negligible levels in 2014 to about 97% in 2026. Energy shortages declined sharply from 4.2% in FY 2013-14 to just 0.03% in FY 2025-26. Rural areas now receive about 22.6 hours of electricity (up from 12.5 hours), while urban areas receive 23.4 hours (up from 22.1 hours). Per capita electricity consumption rose from 957 kWh in 2013-14 to 1,460 kWh in 2024-25 – a 52.6% increase.

Healthcare
Under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana, over 18,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras supply quality generic medicines at 50-80% lower prices, saving families an estimated 40,000 crore in medicine expenses.

Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY, launched in September 2018, provides cashless treatment across empanelled hospitals. Over 1.85 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs are operational, with cumulative footfall of over 540 crores. Out-of-pocket spending on healthcare declined from 60.6% (2014-15) to 39.4% (2021-22).

TB incidence fell 21% from 237 to 187 cases per lakh population between 2015-2024. Malaria cases and deaths dropped by around 80% from 2015-2023.

Education
India has 14.71 lakh schools supporting over 24.69 crore students and 1.01 crore teachers (2024-25). The number of IITs rose

from 16 in 2014 to 23 in 2025, with student strength doubling from 65,000 to 1.35 lakh.

The **Vidya Lakshmi Scheme** (launched 2024) offers collateral-free education loans. Between February 2025 and February 2026, over 60,600 loans were sanctioned, amounting to over 7,750 crore.

Medical colleges have expanded to over 2,045 (including 818 Allopathy, 323 Dental, and 942 Ayush colleges). The number of AIIMS has tripled to 23.

Skill Development and Startups
The Skill India Mission (launched 2015) has trained 27.74 lakh candidates under PMKVY 4.0, 36.48 lakh beneficiaries under JSS, and engaged 54.41 lakh apprentices through NAPS.

Under Startup India, recognised startups grew from 502 in 2016 to over 2.23 lakh by March 2026, generating 23.3 lakh direct jobs. Approximately 48% have at least one woman director or partner.

Digital Governance
Jan Dhan accounts grew from 14.72 crore in 2015 to 58.26 crore as of May 2026, with deposits increasing from 15,670 crore to 3.01 lakh crore. Over 144 crore Aadhaar numbers have been generated. Wireless telephone subscribers reached 125.87 crore (December 2025), up from 937 million in November 2014.

DigiLocker has 69.9 crore total users (2 June 2026), with over 950 crore documents issued. **UMANG** app registrations have increased from 0.24 crore in 2017 to 11.39 crore.

Conclusion
Over the past twelve years, the Government has remained committed to uplifting the middle class through policies and reforms that have eased everyday challenges, strengthened financial security, housing access, healthcare, and skill development opportunities. This sustained approach has improved lives and created a strong foundation for future progress.

Disclaimer: This is an abridged version of the original PIB article "The Middle Class Journey: Progress Powered by Policy" (June 3, 2026). Key facts and data have been retained. For the complete article, please refer to the official PIB website.

From Food Loss To Food Leadership: Why Processing Is South Asia's Next Big Opportunity

Chirag Paswan

South Asia stands at a critical turning point in its food systems journey. Despite being a significant agricultural region with rich agro-biodiversity, too much value is still lost between the farm and the consumer – a missed opportunity for farmers, jobs and nutrition.

India reflects this paradox. According to the FAO, it is the world's largest producer of milk and pulses, and the second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables. Yet significant food losses persist due to gaps in post-harvest handling, storage, logistics, and processing, undermining progress toward global development priorities, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is not just inefficiency – it is a missed opportunity. Every tonne of food lost represents lost income for farmers, lost jobs for young people, and lost nutrition for families. Turning this loss into value must now become a regional priority.

Food processing is key to unlocking value-added agriculture. It connects farms to markets, farmers to firms, and local production to regional and global value chains – serving as a bridge between agriculture and broader economic transformation.

Moving from Volume to Value
For decades, agricultural policy has rightly focused on increasing production and ensuring food security. That agenda has delivered food security gains. But the next phase must focus on value creation – generating jobs, raising farmer incomes and improving nutrition outcomes. In India, only about 17 percent of agricultural output is processed. This must

rise significantly to around 25 percent by 2030 to unlock the full economic potential of the sector. At the same time, reducing post-harvest losses and strengthening processing linkages will be critical to ensuring that more value is retained within the economy. Processing extends shelf life, improves food safety, and opens access to new domestic and export markets. More importantly, it increases the share of economic value that remains within producing countries – benefiting farmers, enterprises, and rural communities.

Shaping Market Led Value Chains

Achieving this transformation will require coordinated investment across the value chain – from production and aggregation to processing, logistics, and market access. A more integrated approach will be essential to meet evolving consumer demands for quality, safety, traceability, and cost-effectiveness.

South Asia's rich agro-biodiversity offers significant potential for higher-value products, particularly as global demand shifts toward more diverse, nutritious, and specialty foods. At the same time, digital solutions can play a critical role in strengthening traceability, improving quality standards, and enhancing competitiveness in increasingly complex global markets.

Public investment has an important role to play, but it must catalyze greater private sector participation. Strengthening the business environment, reducing risk, and enabling effective public-private collaboration will be essential to unlocking the scale of investment required.

India has already taken important steps through flagship programs such as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana, the

Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme, and the Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industries. These initiatives are strengthening infrastructure, expanding cold chains, and supporting small and medium enterprises – laying the groundwork for a more dynamic and competitive sector.

Jobs Where They Are Needed Most
Food processing is not only about economic efficiency – it is about livelihoods.

Across South Asia, millions of young people enter the workforce each year, even as agriculture alone can no longer absorb this growing labor force. Food processing offers a powerful solution.

By creating industries closer to production centers, it generates decentralized employment across logistics, packaging, food technology, and related services. It also creates pathways for entrepreneurship, enabling micro and small enterprises to grow, formalize, and integrate into modern value chains.

This is where the sector's true promise lies: not just in adding value to food, but in creating meaningful jobs at scale – particularly in rural areas and for women and youth.

Competing in a Changing Global Market
India's processed food exports have grown steadily, reflecting its expanding role in global markets. As new trade agreements create market opportunities, the focus must now shift from exporting raw commodities to exporting high-value processed products.

Global consumers are increasingly seeking food that is safe, nutritious, traceable, and sustainably produced. This places a premium on quality, standards, and innovation – areas where India is steadily strengthening its

capabilities.

To fully capture these opportunities, further investments in technology, quality infrastructure, traceability systems, and branding will be critical. Building globally competitive value chains will enable producers and enterprises to move up the value ladder and enhance their presence in international markets.

Sustainability at the Core
Transforming food systems must also be sustainable and resilient.

Reducing food loss is one of the most effective ways to lower pressure on land, water, and energy resources. At the same time, innovations in waste valorization – converting agricultural by-products into new products – are creating new economic opportunities while reducing environmental impact.

A sustainable food processing ecosystem delivers value across all dimensions: supporting better nutrition outcomes, reducing environmental footprints, and increasing incomes and job opportunities across the value chain.

An Opportunity for South Asia's Leadership
What makes this moment unique is that it is not just about one country – it is about a region moving together.

South Asian countries face shared challenges: fragmented supply chains, limited processing capacity, and high post-harvest losses. But these shared constraints also create opportunities for shared solutions.

Regional platforms like South Asian Policy Leadership for Improved Nutrition and Growth (SAPLING) are helping to catalyze this shift – creating space for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and investment that

no single country can achieve alone. The Unlocking Value dialogue is a direct expression of that commitment: bringing together policymakers, innovators, industry leaders, and development partners from across the region to forge the connections, share the knowledge, and build the partnerships that translate into better jobs and more resilient food systems for all.

India, as a leader in both production and policy innovation, has a critical role to play in shaping this regional transformation.

Placing Policies to Action
The choice before us is clear.

We can continue to lose value along the supply chain or we can build modern, integrated value chains that generate and capture value at every stage.

We can remain exporters of raw produce or become leaders in high-value, sustainable food products.

The pathway runs through food processing. From farms to firms, and from local markets to global value chains, the transformation of food systems will define the region's economic future. With the right mix of policy, investment and partnership, South Asia can move from food loss to food leadership.

In this spirit, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries looks forward to hosting the next SAPLING High-Level Policy Dialogue bringing together governments, businesses, and development partners, including the World Bank Group, to advance solutions that create jobs, unlock investment, and build resilient food systems across South Asia.

The author is Union Minister for Food Processing Industries

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

Dr Jitendra Singh convenes public outreach camp at Malhori Reviews development works, local issues

KT News Desk

DODA, JUNE 05: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Minister for State in the Prime Minister's Office, Dr. Jitendra Singh, Friday convened a public outreach camp at Malhori, Kalotha in Doda district.

The Union MoS, as per an official statement, held an extensive interaction with the public representatives, district officers and local residents to review the developmental issues and address the public grievances.

The camp was attended by MLA Doda west Shakti Raj Parihar, Deputy Commissioner Doda, Krishan Lal, concerned officials, Ex-PRIs members and others.

A large gathering of people from Malhori, Kalotha and adjoining areas participated in the camp, making it a significant public outreach programme aimed at strengthening the citizen-government engagement.



During the event, several deputations representing different villages, youth groups, women's organizations, farmers, traders and social activists met the Union Minister and projected their demands and grievances.

The deputations highlighted issues pertaining to upgradation of roads, augmentation of drinking water schemes, improvement of healthcare and educational facilities, strengthening of power infrastructure, expansion of

mobile and internet connectivity, promotion of tourism potential, employment generation and timely implementation of welfare schemes. The deputations sought immediate intervention for resolution of long-pending public issues and requested inclusion of additional developmental projects to improve the quality of life in the region.

The Union Minister assured the deputations that their genuine demands would be examined and addressed in a

phased and time-bound manner through the concerned departments.

During the programme, the Union Minister reviewed the developmental scenario of the area and sought suggestions from the public.

Dr. Jitendra Singh reiterated the government's commitment towards holistic development of remote and rural areas. He emphasized that the aspirations of the people must be addressed through responsive governance and effective implementation of developmental programmes.

The Minister directed the concerned departments to ensure time-bound execution of ongoing projects, speedy redressal of public grievances and better coordination among the departments for improving service delivery. He stressed the need for strengthening healthcare and educational infrastructure, improving road connectivity, ensuring uninterrupted power and water supply and accelerating the developmental works in

underserved areas.

He also instructed the officers to maintain regular public contact, conduct field visits, monitor progress of projects on a routine basis and ensure that benefits of the government schemes reach every eligible beneficiary without delay.

The Union Minister reviewed the status of key development projects and sought updates from the district administration and departmental officers regarding their implementation.

Senior officers from various departments, including Police, Revenue, Rural Development, Health, Education, Forest, Jal Shakti, PWD, Power Development, Irrigation, PMGSY, NHIDCL and other line departments, attended the outreach programme and provided feedback on departmental initiatives and ongoing works.

The Union Minister assured the people that all their genuine issues highlighted during the camp would be taken up for redress on priority.

Nasha Mukht J&K Campaign

DC Srinagar leads plantation drive at GHS School Khonmoh

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 05: To mark the World Environment Day, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Friday led a plantation drive at Government Higher Secondary (GHS) School Khonmoh as a part of the ongoing Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan.

The plantation drive was organized by the District Administration Srinagar in collaboration with Axis Bank and GHS Khonmoh on the eve of World Environment Day-2026 promoting environmental sustainability and encouraging community participation in creating a greener and healthier environment and also signifying a collective responsibility towards a shared commitment to achieving the objectives of a drug-free society.

The event witnessed the participation of Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Chief Education Officer, Ghulam Mohi-Ud-Din, Principal GHS School Khonmoh, Nahid Shah, Cluster Head Axix Bank, Shiekh Gowhar, other Offices as well as enthusiastic, Staff and school Students who actively participated in the programme and planted a variety of saplings within the school premises.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner planted a deodar sapling and highlighted the importance of such initiatives in increasing green cover, mitigating the effects of climate change and fostering environmental awareness among citizens.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the importance of environmental conservation and called upon the students to play a proactive role in protecting surrounding environment. He said that plantation drives not only contribute to ecological balance but also help instill a sense of responsibility and environmental awareness among citizens.

Emphasizing the significance of the Nasha Mukht J&K Campaign, he stated that building a healthy society requires collective efforts towards both environmental protection and the eradication of substance abuse. He urged students to act as ambassadors of positive change by spreading awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse and the benefits of a clean and healthy lifestyle.

Satish Sharma hails Jammu RMC inauguration as major boost to weather forecasting, public safety in J&K, Ladakh

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JUNE 5: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports, and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma, Friday described the inauguration of the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC), Jammu as a landmark achievement that will significantly strengthen the weather forecasting capabilities, disaster preparedness, scientific research and public safety across Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the Minister, as per an official statement, congratulated the Ministry for Earth Sciences, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and all stakeholders involved in establishing the Centre. He termed the elevation of the Meteorological Office Jammu into a full-fledged Regional Meteorological Centre as a recognition of the unique geographical and climatic challenges faced by the Himalayan region.

"Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are among the most climatically sensitive and meteorologically complex regions in the world. The establishment of this Centre marks a transformative step towards providing accurate, localized and timely weather services that are crucial for safeguarding lives, supporting livelihoods and strengthening disaster management systems," the Minister said.

Highlighting the importance of scientific infrastructure in a region prone to avalanches, flash floods, cloudbursts and extreme weather events, Satish Sharma said that the Centre would provide dedicated



expertise in mountain meteorology, cryosphere studies, avalanche forecasting and high-altitude weather services. He said the benefits of the Centre would extend to the farmers, security forces, tourists, researchers and disaster response agencies alike.

The Minister emphasized that improved forecasting and early warning systems would contribute significantly towards minimizing losses arising from natural calamities while enhancing resilience among the communities living in vulnerable areas.

Referring to the growing role of science and technology in governance, Satish Sharma stated that the Jammu and Kashmir government remains committed towards strengthening the scientific institutions and fostering innovation-driven development. He underscored the importance of integrating advanced technologies, data analytics and digital platforms to improve weather forecasting and public service delivery.

"The future belongs to knowledge, innovation and scientific excellence. Institutions such as the Regional Meteorological Centre will not only strengthen weather services but also inspire research,

developmental journey of Jammu and Kashmir, Satish Sharma expressed confidence that the Centre would emerge as a premier institution for meteorological research, forecasting and climate services in the Himalayan region, contributing substantially to public welfare, economic growth and environmental resilience.

During the occasion, Satish Sharma also strongly reiterated the long-pending aspirations of the people of Jammu & Kashmir for the restoration of full statehood. He emphasized that granting statehood would further strengthen democratic institutions, enhance administrative efficiency and empower the people to participate more effectively in the developmental journey of the region.

The Minister stated that the people of Jammu and Kashmir have consistently demonstrated their faith in democratic processes and deserve the restoration of statehood at the earliest. He expressed confidence that the Union Government would take a positive decision in this regard, fulfilling the aspirations of the people.

Highlighting the need for improved transportation infrastructure, Satish Sharma also demanded expedited progress on railway connectivity projects in the Jammu region, particularly the proposed Jammu-Akhnour-Khour belt and the Kaaleeth-Dori Dager railway links. He said that extending rail connectivity to these strategically and economically important areas would boost tourism, facilitate trade and commerce, improve mobility for local residents and create new avenues for socio-economic development.

Transport Commissioner reviews road safety measures on National Highway

KT News Desk

BANIHAL, JUNE 05: Transport Commissioner J&K Vishesh Paul Mahajan Friday chaired a high-level review meeting here at the NHAI Meeting Hall to review and strengthen road safety measures on the National Highway in view of the forthcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY)-2026.

Officers from the Transport Department, Civil Administration, Police, Traffic Police, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the Enforcement Wing attended the meeting.

The meeting focused on ensuring safer and smoother traffic operations, seamless



movement of pilgrims during the Yatra, coordinated enforcement measures, strict action against overspeeding and overloading, deployment of modern enforcement technologies, and strengthening emergency response mechanisms along the highway.

Emphasizing the need for proactive road safety management, the Transport Commissioner stressed on regular road safety audit, timely identification and rectification of accident-prone locations and adoption of best practices aimed at minimizing

road accidents and enhancing commuter safety.

The Transport Commissioner advised NHAI authorities to share CCTV footage and other relevant technical data available at highway monitoring and check-post locations with the Motor Vehicles Department (MVD). He said the integration of technology and real-time surveillance would facilitate effective enforcement against overloading of goods vehicles, overspeeding and other traffic violations, thereby contributing to safer highways and smoother traffic flow during the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2026.

Earlier, the Transport Commissioner interacted

with Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alias Khan; SSP Arun Gupta and other officers. During the interaction, a wide range of transport-related issues were discussed, with special focus on traffic regulation, road safety, public transport services and effective management of vehicular movement during the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2026.

The Transport Commissioner emphasized the importance of coordinated efforts among all concerned agencies to ensure a safe, smooth and hassle-free pilgrimage while maintaining uninterrupted movement of essential services and regular traffic on the National Highway.

World Environment Day

Agriculture Minister calls for collective efforts to protect environment

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 5: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, Friday extended greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the occasion of World Environment Day.

He emphasized the need for collective efforts to protect and preserve the environment for future generations.

The Minister, as per an official statement, said that World Environment Day serves as a reminder of our shared responsibility towards safeguarding the natural resources and maintaining ecological balance. He stressed that environmental conservation is not only essential for sustainable development but is also crucial for ensuring food security, agricultural productivity and the well-being of communities.

Javid Ahmad Dar highlighted the importance of adopting environmentally sustainable agricultural practices, promoting afforestation, conserving

water resources and reducing pollution. He urged the farmers, youth, educational institutions and civil society organizations to actively participate in environmental protection initiatives and contribute towards building a greener and healthier future.

The Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to promote the sustainable agriculture, climate-resilient farming practices and environmental conservation across Jammu and Kashmir. He said that various initiatives are being undertaken to enhance the green cover, encourage efficient use of natural resources and strengthen awareness regarding environmental protection.

"Let us pledge to work together for preservation of our environment and ensure that future generations inherit a cleaner, greener and more sustainable world," the Minister said.

He called upon all stakeholders to make environmental consciousness a way of life and contribute towards the collective goal of ecological sustainability and climate resilience.

CPCO J&K, Ladakh visits Budgam Reviews ongoing census operations



KT News Desk

BUDGAM, JUNE 05: Chief Principal Census Officer (CPCO) and Director Census Operations (DCO), Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Amit Sharma, along with Deputy Commissioner Budgam (Principal Census Officer Budgam), Athar Aamir Khan, chaired a review meeting at the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex, Budgam, to assess the preparedness and progress of the ongoing House Listing Operations (HLO) being conducted from June 1 to June 30, 2026, as part of the Census exercise.

At the outset, the District Census Officer and Additional Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Mehraj-Ud-Din Shah, as per an official statement, briefed the chair on the district's geographical profile, preparedness for Census 2027, and the arrangements put in place for the smooth conduct of the ongoing House Listing Operations. He also highlighted the training programmes being conducted for census personnel across the district and apprised the chair of the district administration's readiness for the Census exercise.

The Deputy Commissioner informed the meeting that all necessary administrative and logistical arrangements have been made to ensure the smooth conduct of Census-related activities across the district.

He emphasized the importance of coordinated efforts among all stakeholders and reiterated the district administration's commitment to ensuring comprehensive coverage and high-quality data collection during the enumeration process. He also directed all field-level officers to extend full support to census personnel and ensure strict adherence to the prescribed guidelines.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on ensuring comprehensive coverage of all households, including migratory populations, and strengthening field-level census operations across the district.

Addressing the officers, Amit Sharma appreciated the dedicated efforts of the field staff and encouraged enumerators and supervisors to discharge their responsibilities with utmost commitment and

professionalism. He emphasized the importance of effective coordination among census functionaries, quality and timely data collection, and strict adherence to census guidelines to ensure accuracy and completeness of the enumeration process. He directed all concerned officers to extend full support to census personnel and take necessary measures to facilitate the smooth conduct of House Listing and Housing Census activities throughout the district.

Amit Sharma informed that for any query or clarification related to Census 2027 in the district, citizens can contact the dedicated toll-free helpline number 1855.

He appealed to the public to remain vigilant against fraudulent calls, messages, or individuals claiming to be associated with the Census exercise and cautioned people against sharing personal, financial, banking, or OTP-related information with anyone in the name of Census.

He further clarified that the Census process is simple and transparent, and citizens are only required to answer the prescribed 33 Census questions during the enumeration process. He urged residents to cooperate with authorized Census personnel and provide accurate information to ensure the success of this important national exercise.

The meeting also reviewed field-level preparedness and discussed various operational aspects related to the Census exercise.

Amit Sharma reiterated that the Census is a crucial national exercise that serves as the foundation for evidence-based planning and development initiatives.

Joint Chief Principal Census Officer, Arun Kumar, also briefed the participants on the monitoring framework for field operations and stressed the importance of real-time tracking and supervision of data collection activities.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (District Census Officer), Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR), all SDMs, Charge Officers, Assistant Chief Principal Census Officer, District Coordinator for Census 2027 Budgam, and other concerned officers and officials.

LCMA holds World Environment Day prog in Sgr

KNO

Srinagar, Jun 05: The Jammu and Kashmir Lakes Conservation and Management Authority (JK LCMA), in collaboration with Crescent Public School Srinagar, on Friday organised a World Environment Day programme to promote environmental awareness and sustainable practices among students.

In a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), a spokesperson said the programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, teachers and officials of JK LCMA.

The event featured awareness sessions, environmental presentations, poster-making activities and a plantation drive aimed at sensitising young minds about the importance of environmental conservation and ecological sustainability.

"The programme was graced by Vice Chairman JK LCMA, Khurshid Ahmad Shah (JKAS), as the chief guest. Addressing the gathering, he stressed the need for collective action to tackle environmental challenges such as pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity," the spokesperson said.

He said the Vice Chairman highlighted the crucial role of educational institutions in

fostering environmental responsibility among the younger generation.

The spokesperson said Khurshid Ahmad Shah also spoke about the importance of conserving Kashmir's fragile ecosystem, particularly its lakes, wetlands, forests and water resources and urged students to adopt environmentally responsible lifestyles and actively participate in conservation efforts.

"The Watershed Manager (Project Officer), JK LCMA, Manzoor Ahmad Bhat, also spoke on the occasion," he said.

According to the statement, students presented awareness messages focusing on environmental protection, waste management and preservation of natural resources. The activities reflected the creativity and commitment of students towards building a greener future.

The spokesperson added that the school management appreciated JK LCMA for organising the awareness programme and providing students an opportunity to engage with important environmental issues.

The event concluded with a pledge by students and participants to contribute towards environmental protection through responsible and sustainable practices in their daily lives.

Delhi govt to invoke DMA Act

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 05: The Delhi government will recover losses from officials found guilty of corruption and will invoke the DMA Act 2005, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Friday, days after a massive fire killed 21 people at a south Delhi hotel erected with little regard to building norms.

The decision to invoke the Disaster Management Act 2005 was taken at a meeting Gupta held with several departments.

"Officials found negligent or involved in corruption will now face action under various provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, which carries a punishment of up to two years' imprisonment along with substantial fines," the chief minister said.

Action will be taken against officials whose negligence or collusion allows illegal constructions, fire safety violations, or other hazardous activities to flourish, she said.

Home Minister Ashish Sood earlier said the Delhi government will invoke the DMA Act to enforce two years' jail for violations of orders and complicity.

"Under this act, there are provisions to recover losses from officers' salary, pension, even their properties," he

said.

Sood said that the chief minister specifically stated that compensation for government losses would no longer remain limited to paperwork.

According to a statement, Gupta said, "Under the Revenue Recovery Act, 1890, losses suffered by the government will be recovered from the salaries, pensions and properties of guilty officials. In addition, the bank accounts and movable and immovable assets of builders, owners and colonisers will be frozen and attached."

In addition, to cut down multiplicity of authorities in the national capital, the government has decided to empower the district magistrates.

Sood said DMs have been directed to identify building violations. Any building above ground-plus four floors will be sealed immediately he added.

District Magistrates will soon have extensive authority to fix accountability of officials working in any department within their administrative districts, initiate disciplinary action directly, order registration of FIRs, approve or cancel leave, and take immediate action against officers who fail to perform their

duties," he said.

The chief minister has directed the DMs to submit daily reports on the removal of illegal construction in the city. Joint inspection committees headed by the DMs have been constituted under the new orders.

These committees will include officers from the police, fire service, and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

"They will conduct intensive inspections of all guest houses, hotels, restaurants, banquet halls and other commercial establishments operating in their respective areas and submit reports within one week," Sood said.

Gupta said buildings lacking valid completion certificates would not be granted new water or electricity connections or no-objection certificates.

She also called for a detailed list, along with photographs, of all ongoing illegal constructions and the officials responsible for them.

She said adverse remarks would be recorded in the APARs (Annual Performance Appraisal Reports) of officials found negligent, affecting their future careers.

Accountability would not be limited to subordinate staff and will be extended to senior officers, she asserted.

Dr Farooq urges youth to lead environmental conservation

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Jun 05: On the occasion of World Environment Day, National Conference (NC) President Dr Farooq Abdullah called for a renewed commitment to environmental protection, stressing that development and economic growth must go hand in hand with ecological sustainability.

Expressing concern over the growing impact of climate change and environmental degradation, Dr Farooq, according to a party statement issued here, said that unchecked deforestation, pollution, encroachment on natural habitats and the reckless exploitation of resources are posing serious threats to the fragile ecosystem of Jammu and Kashmir.

He noted that the region is already experiencing the consequences of global environmental neglect, including shrinking water bodies, erratic weather patterns, loss of biodiversity and the gradual disappearance of several plant and animal species.

"Development is essential for progress, but it should never come at the cost of our environment. We must reassess our priorities and adopt a model of sustainable development that protects nature while meeting the needs of our people," Dr Abdullah said.

Describing Jammu and



Kashmir's natural beauty as one of its greatest strengths, the NC chief emphasised that preserving its forests, lakes, rivers and mountains is not only an environmental responsibility but also vital for the region's cultural identity, tourism sector, and future generations.

The former chief minister urged the younger generation to take a leading role in environmental conservation through awareness campaigns, community initiatives, tree plantation drives, and responsible lifestyle choices. He called upon educational institutions, civil society organisations, and government agencies to work collectively towards building a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable Jammu and Kashmir.

"Protecting the environment is not the responsibility of governments alone; it is a collective duty. Together, we can preserve the priceless natural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir and leave behind a greener future for our children," Dr Farooq added.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Rise as protectors

smugglers have been attached, nearly 700 driving licenses have been cancelled, and recommendations have been made to cancel passports of 130 drug smugglers.

"Fifty-five days ago, from the soil of Jammu, I declared that enough is enough. What began as a war against drugs and narco-terrorism has now ignited into a true people's movement, a movement born of courage, sustained by spirit, and driven by the collective will of ordinary citizens. Today, that resolve stands stronger than ever," the Lieutenant Governor said.

LG Sinha assured proper rehabilitation of those who have fallen into drug addiction.

"With compassion and dignity, we will help them return to the mainstream of society. Through treatment, counselling, and new employment opportunities, we are opening new doors. People must remember that this is not simply a government programme, but it is a social revolution. Together, we will ensure that no drug smugglers or peddlers ever find a place in Jammu Kashmir.

Fifty-five days ago, I stood on Jammu's soil and declared that we would free our children from the poison of drugs, protect our families from being torn apart by drug addiction, and refuse to let our people become hostages to narco-terrorists who profit from suffering and funding terrorism with their black money. We have launched a war against narco-terrorists, who seek to destroy the future of our youth," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that in every march across Jammu Kashmir, he spoke about how drugs are destroying the future of people, robbing them of their ability, their dreams, and their dignity and how the proceeds from drug smuggling is used in buying weapons, and spreading terrorism in Jammu Kashmir.

"This is not simply a matter of ordinary crime but it is also a question of national security and a direct threat to the very survival of our society. The narco-terrorists, whether sitting in neighbouring countries or operating inside Jammu Kashmir, are enemies of our people. They are enemies of our children. They are enemies of our progress. Let me make this clear that narco-terrorists operating in Jammu Kashmir will have to pay a heavy price," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor further observed that the administration will ensure that those who have harmed our youth face justice so severe that the world will remember their punishment.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor launched Sindh Samvad, a podcast series and also felicitated the winners of various competitions organised under the Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir Abhiyaan. (KNO)

LG inaugurates Emergency

The facility is backed by a round-the-clock emergency citizen helpline to provide immediate assistance and crisis mitigation.

In order to ensure a safe and seamless pilgrimage, the Emergency Operations Centre also integrates CCTV Feeds from Baltal Base Camp, approach roads leading upto Baltal Base Camp, Parking Areas in Baltal Base Camp, Sonamarg and Manigam Transit Camp.

It will be instrumental in planning and decision-making during the annual Shri Amarnathji Yatra.

LG inaugurates Yatri Bhawan

Ganderbal town, the shrine attracts a large number of devotees throughout the year, particularly during the annual Mela Kheer Bhawani and Jyeshtha Ashtami, when thousands of pilgrims, including members of the Kashmiri Pandit community, visit the temple. In 2023, several delegations met the Lieutenant Governor to request a Yatri Bhawan. Subsequently, Department of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj through

Rural Engineering Wing (REW) designed the plan and the Lieutenant Governor laid the foundation stone in 2024.

"With Mata Kheer Bhawani's blessing, I had laid the foundation stone on Jyeshtha Ashtami in 2024. The project will enhance the capacity of the shrine to host pilgrims visiting from India and abroad. My goal has been to provide the Kashmiri Pandit community visiting the shrine with excellent facilities and a serene spiritual experience," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The facility constructed within the temple premises at a cost of Rs.3.85 Crore comprises a G+II RCC framed structure with a plinth area of 3,885 sq. ft. and is designed to accommodate approximately 800-900 pilgrims through floor bedding arrangements.

Earlier, the Lieutenant Governor paid obeisance at Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple and prayed for peace, prosperity and the well-being of all.

Art 370 abrogation

be killed were behind us. Unfortunately, we saw them again," he said.

He also expressed concern over the international situation, particularly developments around Iran, saying many students from Jammu and Kashmir study there.

"Statehood promised, but nowhere in sight" Seeking restoration of statehood, Omar said the Centre had publicly committed to a three-stage process involving delimitation, elections and restoration of statehood.

"We had delimitation. We had elections in which people participated in record numbers. But statehood is nowhere to be seen," he said.

Questioning the Centre's repeated reference to restoring statehood at an "appropriate time", Omar asked the Government of India to define the parameters being used to determine that timeline.

"What is the yardstick by which I will measure the appropriate time? Is it violence? Is it the international situation with Pakistan? These are things I do not control," he said.

The Chief Minister said the present Union Territory arrangement weakens democratic governance and limits the powers of the elected government.

"How can I be Chief Minister without choosing my Chief Secretary, Director General of Police or Finance Secretary? What sort of government is that?" he asked.

He said governance and delivery of services would improve once Jammu and Kashmir regains statehood.

"I am not using absence of statehood as an excuse. I am saying governance and delivery will be better when you give us what you promised," he said.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks on restoration of statehood, Omar said, "We were told publicly that this is not just any promise, this is Modi's promise. All we are asking is that the promise be kept."

"Article 370 never hurdle to development" On Article 370, Omar said the constitutional provision was never responsible for lack of development in Jammu and Kashmir and said that decades of violence and instability discouraged investment and economic growth.

"People will not invest money in a place they perceive as unsafe," he said.

Rejecting the argument that Article 370 hindered growth, Omar said several other regions in the country also enjoy special protections and restrictions.

"The BJP said you can't have two systems in one country. But there are places in the country where outsiders cannot buy land and where permits are required," he said.

He said Jammu and Kashmir suffered because of violence over the last three decades and not because of constitutional safeguards.

"People rejected terror" The Chief Minister said the people of Jammu and Kashmir have repeatedly demonstrated

their faith in democracy and rejected violence.

"For the first time in 35 years of violence, people came out openly against terror and against the killing of innocent people. They lit candles, marched and said this is not in our name," he said.

He said voters in Jammu and Kashmir, like elsewhere in the country, want jobs, better healthcare and accountable governance.

"They want to be participants in the development and progress of this country," he said. "One Nation, One Election difficult"

On the proposal of "One Nation, One Election", Omar said implementing such a system in a country as diverse as India would be difficult.

"How do you implement it in a country where governments can fall before completing their terms?" he asked.

The Chief Minister also spoke about federalism and the functioning of Raj Bhavans, saying opposition-ruled states often face greater interference.

"It is still better to be a state with an interfering Raj Bhavan than to be a Union Territory with an even more empowered Raj Bhavan," he said.

Reflects on politics, power Reflecting on his political journey, Omar said power is temporary and should not be taken for granted.

"We are perhaps the most glorified daily wagers in the country. Just because I am in office today is no guarantee that I will be in office tomorrow," he said.

He also recalled witnessing the dismissal of his father Farooq Abdullah's government in 1984 and said those experiences shaped his political understanding from a young age.

Omar said age and political experience had changed his outlook over the years and given him a deeper understanding of governance and public life.

Invites South Indians to visit Kashmir

Inviting people from southern India to visit Jammu and Kashmir, Omar said tourism and filmmaking can play an important role in improving connections between regions.

"We do not get enough people from south of the Vindhyas. Tourism follows movies. We would love to see more South Indian films shot in Kashmir," he said.

Referring to filmmaker Yash Chopra's impact on Swiss tourism, Omar said cinema has immense potential to promote Kashmir as a tourist destination.

"Your films have bigger budgets and are doing better than Bollywood these days. We hope more filmmakers from the South will come and shoot in Kashmir," he added.

He also referred to the film Roja and said movies based on Kashmir earlier could not be shot in the Valley because of the security situation, but circumstances have now improved considerably. (KNO)

Omar for stronger

a successful and impactful tenure in service of the people of Karnataka. He expressed confidence that Jammu & Kashmir and Karnataka would continue to strengthen cooperation and exchange best practices in governance, public welfare and inclusive development.

"It was a pleasure to meet and be able to congratulate my friend D.K. Shivakumar in person on the sidelines of The Hindu Huddle. I'm sure his term in office will be hugely beneficial to the people of Karnataka," Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said after the meeting.

D.K. Shivakumar was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Karnataka on June 3, 2026.

Gilgit-Baltistan, J&K,

former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Meanwhile, the MEA also provided an update on the victims of the recent hotel fire in south Delhi, saying 13 foreign nationals were among the 21 people killed in the incident.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the

deceased included four citizens of Nigeria, three from Kyrgyzstan, and one each from Mozambique, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh, Congo, Liberia and Iraq.

India is in contact with the embassies concerned and is facilitating documentation, consular assistance and medical support for those affected, he said.

Jaiswal added that around 20 to 22 foreign nationals sustained injuries in the blaze and are receiving necessary assistance from authorities. (KNO)

Committed to greener,

highlighted the importance of environmental conservation and sustainable development as key priorities of governance.

He called upon all citizens to actively participate in the collective mission of preserving natural heritage and building a greener, cleaner, healthier, and more climate-resilient Jammu and Kashmir for future generations.

Police launch

thereby reducing disputes, overcharging and congestion along the Yatra tracks.

The officer said the app is expected to instil confidence among pilgrims, tourists and residents. "It will ensure that Yatris, tourists and local citizens interact only with verified service providers," he said, adding that the app also empowers genuine service providers by providing them with a digital identity and formal recognition.

A tourist said it would contribute immensely to public safety.

"The QR code provides a sense of security and safety for tourists. It is a very good initiative. Safety is the priority and is extremely essential," the tourist said.

Meanwhile, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Anantnag, Amod Ashok Nagpure, told KNO that elaborate security arrangements have been put in place to ensure a safe and peaceful pilgrimage scheduled to commence on July 3.

He said 140 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) will be deployed across the district, while several technology-driven measures, including the newly launched 'Pahchan App', have been introduced to strengthen security and streamline pilgrim services.

Nagpure said all service providers associated with the Yatra, including pony handlers, pithoos and taxi operators, have been verified through the app and issued QR codes by the police.

"Pilgrims, tourists and security personnel can scan these QR codes to verify the credentials of service providers and ensure that they are police-verified," he said.

The SSP said the step is aimed at keeping illegal and unregistered service providers away from the Yatra and preventing anti-social elements from infiltrating the pilgrimage area.

He added that police have further strengthened security measures by increasing CCTV surveillance, installing elevated watchtowers, introducing AI-based facial recognition systems and enhancing RFID-based monitoring to ensure foolproof security during the pilgrimage. (KNO)

DGP launches tree

green cover across the Union Territory.

"Today, on the occasion of World Environment Day, Shri Nalin Prabhat-IPS, DGP J&K, started a tree plantation campaign by planting a Cedar tree (Cedrus deodara) at Anantnag to support environmental conservation, increase green cover and promote environmental awareness among employees and the public," Kashmir Zone Police said in a post on X. (KNO)

Sgr man's body

officials said investigation has been taken up and the body will be handed over to the family after completion of necessary legal formalities. (KNO)

Climate change

Highlighting the significance of this year's World Environment Day themes, including Nature-based Solutions, climate resilience and the circular economy, Prof Romshoo said these approaches provide a practical framework for protecting the environment while simultaneously supporting economic growth and social well-being.

He said that advances in science and technology have significantly enhanced the understanding of environmental changes taking place across the Himalayan region. Scientific monitoring, environmental assessment and knowledge generation have enabled researchers and policymakers to make informed decisions regarding conservation and climate adaptation, he added.

The noted scientist said that through the application of science and technology, we have strengthened our ability to monitor environmental changes and generate scientific evidence that informs policy and decision-making. However, while scientific progress is important, we must also recognise the intrinsic value of nature and promote a harmonious co-existence between people and the ecosystems upon which their well-being depends, he said.

Calling for collective responsibility, Prof Romshoo urged governments, institutions and citizens to work together to protect mountain ecosystems, restore degraded wetlands, secure water resources and adopt climate-resilient development pathways.

"On this World Environment Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to protecting our fragile mountain ecosystems, restoring wetlands, safeguarding water resources and pursuing environmentally sustainable development for present and future generations," he added.

Echoing similar concerns, environmentalist and former academician Dr M.R.D. Kundangar stressed the need to conserve the region's natural assets before irreversible damage occurs.

"Our natural resources, including lakes, wetlands, rivers and streams, are under immense pressure due to misuse and neglect. Climate change is increasingly threatening glaciers and other critical ecosystems. These resources are our heritage and must be preserved at all costs for future generations," he said.

Dr Kundangar warned that continued degradation of water bodies and ecological systems could have far-reaching consequences for water security, biodiversity and public welfare across the region.

Dr Aamir Hussain Bhat, Manager SECAP (Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan), said environmental protection should be viewed not merely as an option but as a collective responsibility.

"Environmental protection is no longer a choice; it is a responsibility. The true measure of development lies not in what we build today, but in what we preserve for tomorrow," he said.

Dr Bhat said that World Environment Day serves as a powerful reminder that safeguarding natural resources is a duty owed to future generations. He pointed out that climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution continue to emerge as major challenges to sustainable development worldwide.

He stressed that governments, educational institutions, local communities and individuals must work collectively to promote environmentally responsible practices and reduce ecological footprints.

"Every tree planted, every water source protected and every sustainable choice made today contributes to a healthier, more resilient and environmentally secure future," he said.

According to experts, preserving Kashmir's glaciers, wetlands, forests and water bodies is crucial not only for ecological balance but also for ensuring long-term economic and social sustainability. They called upon citizens to adopt environmentally conscious lifestyles and support conservation initiatives aimed at protecting the Valley's unique natural heritage. (KNO)

Smart borders to come up soon, new security grid to feature cutting-edge tech: Amit Shah

PTI

Agartala, Jun 5: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the government's "smart border" project is in the final stage, and the new security grid will feature cutting-edge tech, local administration and border sentinels.

Shah, addressing BSF personnel at Lankamura Border Outpost in Tripura, said wherever troops of the force is deployed, "we will build smart borders there".

"Smart borders will be introduced soon with a new security grid to include cutting-edge tech, local administration and border sentinels," the home minister said.

"The concept of smart border will be implemented in seven to eight places of the country as a pilot project. I request the Union home secretary and the director general of the BSF to visit border areas, and hold talks," Shah said.

Shah said every border has its own challenges, from human trafficking and arms smuggling to drug supply, "but the BSF jawans do their best to face these challenges".

"To make India a 'viksit' (developed) nation by 2047, we have



to stop the entry of fake notes, human trafficking and drugs smuggling from across the borders," the senior BJP leader said.

Shah had in May said the government will launch a tech-enabled "smart border" project by the next year to make the 6,000-km fronts with Pakistan and Bangladesh impenetrable, and ensure that the "conspiracy" to change the demography of the

country is defeated.

"The government of India has decided that not only will we stop infiltration, but we will find each and every infiltrator and send them out of the country," the home minister had said.

"I want to assure BSF troops that we will launch the smart border project within the 60th year of its raising, and we will

make the Bangladesh and Pakistan borders impenetrable through major technical assistance," Shah had said in New Delhi on May 22, while delivering the annual Rustomji Memorial lecture hosted by the BSF.

The "smart border" will use technology, drones, radars and smart cameras to help create an impenetrable border, he told the gathering.

RBI keeps policy rate unchanged for second time in row amid West Asia crisis

PTI

Mumbai, Jun 5: The Reserve Bank on Friday expectedly kept interest rates unchanged for the second time in a row as it weighed the impact of rising energy prices and supply disruptions caused by the West Asia crisis.

The policy decision comes amid a three-month long conflict in West Asia that has disrupted energy supplies, leading to a surge in crude oil prices, and created fiscal and inflationary pressures for import-dependent countries like India.

Announcing the second bi-monthly monetary policy for the current fiscal, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has unanimously decided to retain short-term lending rate or repo rate at 5.25 per cent with a neutral stance.

The interest rate pause comes even as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) based headline retail inflation has moved closer to the RBI's medium-term target of 4 per cent at 3.48 per cent in April.

Moreover, there is fear of inflation further inching up due



to expected weak monsoon and fuel price rise in the coming months.

Additionally, the rupee has been depreciating continuously since the beginning of this year. The rupee settled at a record closing low of 96.86 against the USD on May 20, 2026, dropping 33 paise from its previous close.

Once considered among Asia's more stable currencies, the rupee has now become one of the worst-performing emerging market currencies this year, pressured by a mix of expensive oil, capital outflows,

widening trade deficits and a surging US dollar.

It has depreciated about 7 per cent so far in 2026 and is down roughly 6 per cent since the outbreak of the Iran conflict in late February.

Based on the recommendation of the MPC, the RBI reduced the repo rate by 25 bps each in February, April, and December 2025 and 50 basis points in June amidst easing retail inflation.

India's retail inflation dropped to a historic low of 0.25 per cent in October 2025, marking the lowest level since the CPI series was introduced.

PM Modi good friend; India, US will get to trade deal: Trump



PTI

Washington, Jun 5: US President Donald Trump said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a good friend and expressed confidence that the United States and India would reach a trade agreement.

"We will get to a deal because I like your prime minister a lot. He is a good friend of mine. We get along great, and we are gonna make a deal," Trump told reporters at the Oval Office on Thursday.

Responding to a question on the trade deal being negotiated between the two countries, Trump said India had taken advantage of

US policies for years and charged "tremendous tariffs".

"They charged tremendous amounts of tariffs to our companies, and we didn't charge them anything," Trump said.

A US delegation was in India earlier this week and concluded four days of negotiations on an interim bilateral agreement on Thursday.

India's commerce ministry said the trade talks were marked by a spirit of cooperation and pragmatism, with both sides reaffirming their commitment to concluding a mutually beneficial agreement that strengthens bilateral trade and economic ties.

GDP numbers 'tight slap' to Rahul Gandhi; economy resilient under Modi: BJP

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 5: The BJP on Friday claimed that the latest GDP data shows that India's economy continues to demonstrate "remarkable resilience and sustained growth" despite global uncertainties and slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his recent claim that a "massive economic tsunami" is coming.

India's economy grew at a higher pace of 7.7 per cent during 2025-26 as compared to 7.1 per cent in 2024-25, according to government data released on Friday.

In the January-March period of the 2025-26 fiscal year, the gross domestic product (GDP) has been estimated to grow 7.8 per cent, the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) said.

Commenting on the data, BJP president Nitin Nambin said in a post on X, "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji, India's economy continues to demonstrate remarkable resilience and sustained growth despite global uncertainties."

The GDP growth rate of 7.7 per cent in FY 2025-26 and 7.8 per cent in Q4 of FY 2025-26 reflects robust economic activity and broad-based growth across sectors, he said.

"This momentum is strengthening investment, expanding opportunities for youth and



enhancing the ease of living for our citizens," the BJP chief said, adding, "These encouraging figures underscore India's march towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047." BJP MP and national spokesperson Sambit Patra shared on X the government's press release on the latest GDP data and hit out at Gandhi.

"Use this version ... Naysayers predicted slowdown, panic and collapse. India answered with 7.7% GDP growth in FY 2025-26," he said.

Patra added, "All engines of the economy are firing - consumption, investment, manufacturing, rural demand, credit and services." Another BJP spokesperson, Shehzad Poonawalla, termed the

latest GDP data a "tight virtual slap" on the face of Gandhi, the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

"Real GDP has been revised upwards and estimated to grow by 7.7 per cent in FY 2025-26. Real GDP has been estimated to grow by 7.8 per cent in Q4 of FY 2025-26 ... Tight virtual slap on face of LoP. Leader of Propaganda who said Economy is dead," Poonawalla said in a post on X.

BJP Rajya Sabha MP and national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said that amid adverse global conditions, India is "skillfully" facing challenges and steadily advancing on the path of economic growth and progress under Modi's leadership.

Centre scraps tax on foreign investors' returns from govt bonds, eases norms to attract capital inflows



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 5: The government on Friday issued an Ordinance exempting foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) from paying income tax on interest earnings and capital gains arising from investments in government securities, while the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) unveiled a series of measures aimed at attracting long-term foreign capital and strengthening India's external financing position.

The Ordinance amends the Income Tax Act to provide tax exemptions on interest income and capital gains arising from the sale, exchange or transfer of government securities, with effect from April 1, according to a gazette notification dated June 5.

The Finance Ministry said the exemption would apply to any interest income or capital gains accruing to FPIs on or after April 1 from investments in government securities (G-Secs).

Currently, foreign investors are subject to a 12.5 per cent long-term capital gains tax on listed shares and bonds held for more than 12 months and a 20 per cent withholding tax on interest earned from government bonds.

The Ordinance, signed by President Droupadi Murmu, defines the BIS as the international financial institution established in 1930 and headquartered in Basel, Switzerland. It also references existing statutory definitions of foreign institutional investors and government securities under Indian law.

India-UK FTA offers commercial impetus for co-creation: CJJ Surya Kant

PTI

London, Jun 5: The India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is a "historic moment" for both nations that provides the commercial impetus for co-creation in the arena of mediation and arbitration, Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant said in London on Friday.

Delivering the inaugural address at the Indian Council of Arbitration's (ICA) international conference on 'Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as a Catalyst for Strengthening India-UK Economic Partnership', CJI Kant called for ensuring a level playing field and procedures proportionate to the value and urgency of disputes.

He highlighted that as both economies work towards a deeper commercial partnership, confidence in dispute resolution mechanisms is equally important. "Just last year, the



India-UK Free Trade Agreement was concluded, which was an unquestionable historic moment for both nations, because at a time when international trade discourse is marked by strain and uncertainty, India and the UK showed the world a better way forward," said CJI Kant.

"We meet at a very significant moment in the relationship between India and the United

realities," he said.

The CJI noted that the FTA, which is in the process of being implemented in the coming months, has created the "commercial impetus" for developments across two sophisticated common law jurisdictions to cohere.

"What is needed now is not comparison, but co-creation. The task is to design together an ADR corridor in which both systems lend each other credibility, talent and standards, ultimately building something neither could build alone," he said.

Kant drew parallels between modern arbitration mechanisms and India's ancient panchayat system, which placed trust in elders to resolve commercial disputes.

"In principle, I would say, justice is most legitimate when it is chosen freely, delivered by someone who understands your world and proportionate to what

is actually at stake. Arbitration is simply what happens when you take this instinct and give it a framework," he said.

The CJI said the commercial reality of the FTA demands an arbitration mediation protocol that preserves commercial relationships, a joint institutional framework that builds shared arbitration panels, and digital platforms that make these mechanisms accessible to businesses of every scale.

"This is where co-creation must begin," he said, flagging concrete steps towards achieving that goal.

He suggested a joint India-UK arbitrator accreditation and training programme to build a shared pool of practitioners, an affordable institutional arbitration framework platform, and connecting arbitration with mediation through openly designed hiring protocols.

Nepal Foreign minister Shisir Khanal begins 3-day India visit

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 5: Nepal Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal on Friday kicked off a three-day visit to India to strengthen bilateral ties amid a raging controversy triggered by Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah's remarks on the boundary row between the two countries. Khanal is set to hold wide-ranging talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday.

"With Nepal, we have an expansive agenda from development cooperation to people-to-people ties to trade and investment. All these issues will be discussed when the two foreign ministers meet," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"We are keen to further strengthen this multifaceted partnership that we have with Nepal," he said at his weekly media briefing. It is the first to India by a minister from Shah's government since it assumed office in March.

Late last month, Shah sought involvement of China and the United Kingdom to address the long-standing border dispute between India and Nepal.

Days later, New Delhi categorically rejected any role for third parties to resolve its boundary row with Nepal, saying the two countries have an established bilateral mechanism to deal with all aspects of the border issue.

Chinese Prez Xi Jinping will travel to North Korea next week in first visit since 2019

AP

Beijing, Jun 5: Chinese leader Xi Jinping will travel to North Korea next week, both countries announced Friday, in what will be his first visit in nearly seven years.

His trip will be the latest in a series of steps by China to reinforce its close ties with its nuclear-armed neighbor, whose leader Kim Jong Un has reached out to Russia in recent years, notably by sending troops and conventional weapons to support its war against Ukraine.

Kim has likewise been cozying up again to China, the North's biggest trade partner and aid provider, in the past year. "As North Korea builds closer ties with Russia, China seeks to use Xi's trip to reassert its influence over Pyongyang and safeguard its strategic interests in northeast Asia," said William Yang, an analyst for the International Crisis Group.

Xi will make a state visit from Monday to Tuesday, state media from both nations said in brief dispatches. His last visit was in June 2019.

The trip will come just weeks after Xi hosted US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in quick succession in Beijing.

North Korea's nuclear



weapons program has long been a major concern for the United States, which opposes it. The UN has imposed economic sanctions on North Korea because of its nuclear and missile development.

The announcement of the trip came a day after North Korea unveiled a new facility to produce the ingredients for nuclear bombs. South Korea's military has assessed the new nuclear facility as a uranium enrichment plant.

During a visit to the plant, Kim announced plans to bolster the country's nuclear forces "at an exponential rate." Experts say the plant's disclosure implies that Kim was eager to cement his country's status as a nuclear weapons

state ahead of Xi's visit.

The experts say Kim wants international recognition as a nuclear state so that he can demand the lifting of the sanctions. They say Kim would ultimately push for arms reductions in return for a partial surrender of his nuclear capability.

Kim has been focusing on expanding his nuclear arsenal since his high-stakes diplomacy with Trump collapsed in 2019.

Trump has repeatedly expressed his desire to restore diplomacy with Kim, but the North Korean leader has said the US must first drop its demand for North Korea to denuclearize as a precondition for talks. Xi and Kim met

in Beijing in September and pledged mutual support and enhanced cooperation. Kim was in the Chinese capital to attend a Chinese military parade alongside other foreign leaders including Putin.

Russia and China, both veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council, have previously frustrated the US and others' efforts to toughen international sanctions on North Korea, despite its banned weapons tests.

At their meeting in Beijing last month, Putin and Xi expressed their opposition to "foreign policy isolation, economic sanctions, military pressure and other methods of creating threats to the security" of North Korea, according to a statement from the Kremlin.

Embracing the ideas of a "new Cold War" and a multipolar world, Kim has pushed for a more assertive foreign policy by expanding ties with countries locked in confrontations with the United States.

Xi, who traveled widely in his first years in power, has curtailed his international trips sharply since the COVID-19 pandemic. His last overseas trip was to South Korea last fall for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, where he talked with Trump.

Iran dismisses idea of Trump meeting supreme leader



AFP

Tehran, Jun 5: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has dismissed the idea of his country's supreme leader meeting Donald Trump, after the US president floated the prospect.

On Wednesday, Trump told the New York Post: "Yeah, I'd like to meet him," when he was asked about a possible encounter, adding that "we probably will meet at some point, depending on how it all works out."

Iran's top diplomat however played down the chances in an interview with Lebanese media aired on Thursday night, suggesting it was not realistic.

"I saw a report which apparently said that he (Trump) had stated that he was ready for a meeting or that he wanted to hold a meeting," Araghchi told Al Mayadeen television channel. "I think we should be realistic and think and live in

the real world," he said.

Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei was appointed Iran's supreme leader in March after the death of his father and predecessor Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes on February 28.

Araghchi said in the interview that during the attacks that killed Ali Khamenei he had been inside the leader's office where he died, but in another wing of the building so was unharmed.

The attacks prompted Iran to retaliate with missile and drone strikes against Israel and US allies in the Gulf region.

Araghchi also said the new supreme leader has a "completely close and effective presence in the country's affairs and has full control."

He said Mojtaba Khamenei's absence from public view since his appointment was "due to security considerations" surrounding the war, which has been paused since April 8 by a fragile ceasefire.

Iran says fired 'warning missiles' at US destroyers in Gulf of Oman

REUTERS

Tehran, Jun 5: Iran's military said on Friday it had fired "warning missiles" at two US destroyers in the Gulf of Oman, forcing the vessels to leave the area, according to state media. It said the two destroyers left the Gulf of Oman "following the firing of warning missiles" by Iranian forces, according to a statement carried by state news agency IRNA.

The operation was in response to "maritime misconduct and harassment, as well as the hijacking of commercial vessels and oil tankers by the terrorist naval forces of the United States," the military said.

The US military's Central Command was quick to deny that the incident had taken place.

"Iranian forces did NOT attack or fire at US Navy warships. Doing so would be a gross violation of the ceasefire."

It said its forces "continue to operate freely in regional waters" and were enforcing the US counterblockade on Iranian ports.

It is the latest episode to shake a ceasefire announced on April 8 that has largely halted hostilities between Iran and the United States as well as Israel following the outbreak of war on February 28, when allied forces targeted Iran.

Efforts to end the war through direct and mediated talks have so far failed.

Kremlin says Putin briefed on Zelensky letter

REUTERS

Moscow, Jun 5: Russian President Vladimir Putin has been informed about an open letter from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Izvestia news outlet on Friday.

"Yes, overnight we already handed over (to Putin) the written version. What came from the media was passed on to the president, and he has reviewed it. The president has been briefed," Peskov said.

Zelensky published the open letter to Putin on Thursday in which he proposed the two leaders meet to agree on an end to the war, warning that Kyiv stood ready to fight on otherwise. He also taunted Putin, saying Russians were getting tired of both him and the war.

FIFA prohibits fans from bringing refillable water bottles into World Cup stadiums

AP

Coral Gables (Florida), Jun 5: FIFA has made a late change of policy to bar World Cup fans from bringing refillable water bottles into the tournament's 16 stadiums across North America including some with limited or no shade from the sun.

The "Stadium Code of Conduct" update was criticized Thursday by an English fan group, which argued FIFA had given assurances

on carrying empty plastic bottles to fill with freely available water at a tournament where heat and extreme weather are expected to be a factor. "Naturally, the immediate thought from supporters is this is just the latest money grab," the Free Lions fan group said in a statement. Water, sodas and juices sold at World Cup stadiums are supplied exclusively by long-time FIFA sponsor Coca-Cola when the tournament starts next Thursday.

Gambhir ends silence on Pant's removal from Test vice-captaincy

Backs Sai Sudharsan

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 5: India head coach Gautam Gambhir on Friday said Sai Sudharsan has not got a fair run at the No.3 slot and indicated that the left-hander will be preferred over Devdutt Padikkal in the Test format ahead of the one-off game against Afghanistan here.

Gambhir also stated that the team will prepare four spinners for the tour of Sri Lanka



in August.

India will take on Afghanistan in a one-off Test starting here on Saturday which is

not a part of the current World Test Championship cycle, in which the home side is currently placed

sixth. "Sai Sudharsan has not got a fair chance. He played mostly in England and I believe he needs to get a fair chance," Gambhir told the reporters here.

"We can (only) pick 11 (players) and Sai isn't in bad form. He scored 700 runs in IPL. If we judge Sai on basis of 4-5 games we will never be able to build something," he added.

With Manav Suthar and Harsh Dube aiming for one spot as a left-arm spinner, Gambhir said India will need to prepare multiple spin bowling options for the two-Test series in Sri Lanka.

India beat Pakistan 5-3 in thrilling semi-final to enter U18 Men's Asia Cup final



PTI

Kakamigahara (Japan), Jun 5: The Indian hockey team showed incredible character to defeat arch-rivals Pakistan 5-3 in a high-voltage semi-final match of the U18 Men's Asia Cup here on Friday.

Trailing 2-3 until the final quarter, India produced an outstanding attacking display in the final minutes to secure their place in the summit clash.

The match began with a quiet and tense opening, as both teams fought hard for control in the midfield. India found their rhythm in the 12th minute when a brilliant run from their own half forced a defensive error from Pakistan, earning India a penalty stroke.

Forward Ashish Tani Puri (12') stepped up and calmly converted it to give India an early 1-0 lead, which they maintained until the end of the first quarter.

Pakistan came out playing aggressively in the

second quarter and won their first penalty corner in the 16th minute. Indian goalkeeper Ayush Rajak and defender Ansh Bahutra combined perfectly to save a powerful drag-flick from Ahmad Uzair. Pakistan kept pressing and found their equaliser in the 27th minute when Adeel intercepted a pass, broke through the defence, and scored a field goal to make it 1-1 at half time.

The third quarter saw intense action from both sides. India reclaimed the lead in the 35th minute when Shahrukh Ali (35') capitalised on quick passing and smashed the ball into the net.

However, the joy was short-lived as Pakistan responded just two minutes later through a field goal by Muhammad Farhan Aslam in the 37th minute. Pakistan then took the lead for the first time in the 42nd minute when Uzair Ahmad Qureshi converted a penalty corner with a precise drag-flick, leaving India

trailing 2-3 at the end of the third quarter.

With their campaign on the line, India launched a furious attack in the final quarter. The pressure forced a green card for Pakistan's Muzammil Saeed in the 46th minute, and India immediately won consecutive penalty corners. Ashish Tani Puri (49') fired home a superb drag-flick from the second penalty corner to level the score at 3-3.

India completely dominated the following minutes, earning a series of penalty corners. Though Pakistan's defence blocked a few attempts, they could not stop the Indian front-line for long.

In the 53rd minute, Ashish scored another brilliant penalty corner to complete his hat-trick and put India ahead 4-3.

With just four minutes left on the clock, India won another penalty corner, and Ashish (56') hit the back of the net once again to score his fourth goal of the match, extending the lead to 5-3.

Movies Watchlist

Saturday, 6th June

- + **PEDDI (HINDI) (U/A16+)**
01:20 PM, 06:30 PM
- + **HAI JAWANI TOH ISHQ HONA HAI (HINDI ATMOS) (UA16+)**
11:00 AM, 01:50 PM, 04:40 PM, 07:30 PM
HINDI - 10:00 AM
- + **OBSESSION (ENGLISH) (A)**
05:00 PM
- + **BANDAR (HINDI)(A)**
12:50 PM, 07:20 PM
- + **HE-MAN THE MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE (ENG WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLE) (UA16+)**
03:40 PM
HINDI - 10:30 AM

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For assistance with tickets