



Zojila tunnel breakthrough today; Gadkari to trigger blast

13.15 km tunnel to provide all-weather connectivity to Ladakh, boost civilian movement, logistics, strategic mobility

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Jun 08: India's longest tunnel project at Zojila, a Rs 6,500-crore strategic infrastructure initiative, is set to achieve a major breakthrough on Tuesday, with Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari scheduled to attend the ceremony.

An official told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that Gadkari will visit Sonamarg on Tuesday to trigger the breakthrough blast of the main tunnel, marking a key milestone in the prestigious project.

The 13.15-km-long tunnel, being constructed at an altitude of 11,578 feet by Hyderabad-based Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd (MEIL), has witnessed excavation of over 13 kilometres, bringing it close



to the key tunnelling milestone where excavation faces from both ends meet.

Located around 24 km from Sonamarg and 103 km from Srinagar, the tunnel is expected

to provide all-weather connectivity between Srinagar and Ladakh, significantly improving

access to Drass, Kargil and Leh, and boosting civilian movement, logistics and strategic mobility in the region.

In a statement, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways described the project as one of the most challenging in the Himalayas, adding that it is set to achieve a "historic milestone" with the breakthrough blasting of the main tunnel on June 9, 2026.

Earlier, Harpal Singh, joint chief operating officer of Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Limited, had told KNO that excavation has entered its final phase, with only a few metres of digging left before the two ends of the tunnel meet.

He said work on the main tunnel was undertaken simultaneously from the Baltal side in Kashmir and the Minamarg side in Ladakh | [More on P6](#)

LG visits Mubarak Mandi Heritage Complex, reviews progress of projects



KT News Desk

Jammu, Jun 08: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday visited Mubarak Mandi Heritage Complex and reviewed the progress of ongoing projects pertaining to conservation and development of the Heritage Complex.

MLA Jammu East Yudhvir Sethi, Chief Secretary Atal Dullo, Principal Secretary Culture Brij Mohan Sharma, Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar, IGP Jammu Bhim Sen Tuti, Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation Dr. Devansh Yadav, Deputy Commissioner Jammu Rakesh Minhas, SSP Jammu Joginder Singh, Executive Director Mubarak Mandi Jammu Heritage Society (MMJHS) Ms Deepika Sharma and concerned officers were present.

The Lieutenant Governor inspected the restoration work initiated for the damaged wall and slab of historic Gadadhar Ji Temple adjacent to the Mubarak Mandi Heritage Complex. He directed officials to expedite the restoration process while ensuring the quality of works.

Commissioner JMC apprised the Lieutenant Governor on the progress of Construction of ramp based multi-level car parking facility at Mubarak Mandi Heritage Complex.

Later, the Lieutenant Governor visited the newly opened Library cum Cafeteria. Executive Director MMJHS apprised on the remaining works of the revival, restoration and renovation of Mubarak Mandi Jammu Heritage Complex.

The projects included Conservation | [More on P6](#)

'Centre, J&K govt committed to expanding access to quality education'



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 08: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Monday held a meeting with Jammu and Kashmir Education

Minister Sakina Itoo and discussed issues pertaining to teacher education institutions.

He also reviewed the progress of school and higher education initiatives in the Union Territory. | [More on P6](#)

INDIA bloc meet: Omar asks allies to join J&K's statehood protest in Delhi

Mehbooba Mufti also attends

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 08: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday urged INDIA bloc allies to join the National Conference's protests in New Delhi over the restoration of Jammu & Kashmir's statehood.

In a post on X, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Omar, during the INDIA bloc's meeting in New Delhi today, called on coalition partners to participate in the NC's protests over the restoration of statehood.

"In the INDIA Bloc meeting held today, Hon'ble CM Omar



Abdullah asked all the participants to join JKNC when we come to Delhi to protest for the restoration of statehood. He also informed them that we

would be writing to each of them individually as well, "the NC said in the post.

At its meeting held on June 3 at Dachigam, | [More on P6](#)

LG, CM condole demise of DC Udhampur's father

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jun 08: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah have expressed grief and heartfelt condolences to Mingsha Sherpa, Deputy Commissioner

Udhampur, on the sad demise of his father Dawa Sherpa.

In a condolence message, the Lieutenant Governor said: "My thoughts and prayers are with Shri Mingsha Sherpa and his | [More on P6](#)

Pilgrim safety foremost priority: IGP Birdi to officials

Chairs meeting at PCR; takes stock of arrangements for Amarnath Yatra, Muharram

KNO DESK

Srinagar, Jun 08: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir, V K Birdi on Monday directed officials to ensure peaceful and smooth conduct of forthcoming Amarnath Yatra and observance of the Muharram period.

While chairing a high-level meeting at PCR Kashmir, IGP Birdi, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Pilgrim safety is the foremost priority. We need to enhance surveillance. Vulnerable stretches along the Yatra routes and highways have to be monitored



continuously." IGP Birdi asked officers to ensure regular area domination and instructed them to strengthen nighttime security measures and maintain heightened alertness to deter any untoward incidents.

IGP Kashmir instructed officers to ensure comprehensive

security arrangements at all Yatra camps, including the installation of surveillance systems at key locations and the deployment of sufficient manpower to manage pilgrim movement and respond to emergencies.

M U H A R R A M ARRANGEMENTS REVIEWED An official | [More on P6](#)

Chief Secy reviews Census-2027 House Listing

6.67 lakh households complete self-enumeration in J&K

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Jun 08: Chief Secretary Atal Dullo on Monday chaired a meeting of the UT Level Census Coordination Committee (UTLCCC) to review the pace and progress of the ongoing House Listing Operations (HLO) being conducted as part of the first phase of the Census-2027 across the districts of J&K.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary, PD&MD; Secretary, RDD and Director, Census Operations, J&K and Ladakh along with other concerned officers from Planning and Census Departments.

Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners attended the meeting through



video conferencing.

During this meeting the Chief Secretary emphasized the importance of timely and accurate completion of the census exercise, describing it as a critical national activity that serves as the foundation for evidence-based planning and policy formulation.

He directed all Deputy

Commissioners, District Census Officers and field functionaries to ensure full cooperation and coordination for achieving complete coverage of households and population groups across the UT.

The Chief Secretary further enjoined upon the Planning Department to closely monitor the progress of the House

Listing Operations on a daily basis and ensure their meticulous completion by June 30, 2026.

He emphasized the importance of maintaining the prescribed timelines and directed that all necessary support be extended to the field functionaries engaged in the exercise. He also advised that the staff deployed for the Census operations be retained in their present assignments until the successful and satisfactory completion of the exercise.

The Director Census Operations, J&K and Ladakh, Amit Sharma briefed the meeting about the pace and progress achieved till date. He divulged that extensive preparatory arrangements | [More on P6](#)

Kashmir records heavy tourist footfall in early June

Over 6 lakh tourists visit Valley in first 5 months of 2026

SAJID RAINA

Srinagar, Jun 08: Kashmir witnessed a heavy tourist rush during the first week of June this year with stakeholders exuding hope that Valley could record one of its highest tourist arrivals this year amid improved connectivity and growing footfall at both established and offbeat destinations.

According to official data accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), more than six lakh tourists have visited Jammu

and Kashmir so far this year.

Officials attributed the increase in tourist arrivals to improved mobility and easier access to the Valley through road, rail and air connectivity.

The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway via Banihal continued to witness the highest tourist movement, while rail travel registered a significant increase this year.

The recently launched Jammu-Srinagar Vande Bharat Express has further strengthened connectivity between the two regions, tourism officials said.

"We are witnessing encouraging tourist arrivals across destinations in Kashmir. The response during the first week of June has been very good. We are hopeful that Jammu and Kashmir will record one of the highest tourist footfalls this year," a Tourism Department official said.

The official said tourist arrivals have remained steady despite the brief setback caused by the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

Popular tourist destinations including Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonamarg witnessed a



large number of visitors during the week. Offbeat destinations such as Gurez, Doodhpathri, Bangus Valley, Lolab and Yusmarg also reported a significant increase in tourist arrivals.

Rahul Sharma, 32, a tourist from New Delhi, said improved rail connectivity had made travel to Kashmir easier. "The Vande Bharat service has reduced travel time considerably. The journey was comfortable and convenient," he said.

Priya Mehta, 28, from Mumbai, said she was visiting Kashmir for the first time.

"We visited Gulmarg and Srinagar and are planning to travel to Gurez. The transport facilities have improved and travelling has become easier," she said.

Harpreet Singh, 35, from Punjab, said he chose Kashmir for a family vacation because of the improved connectivity.

"We travelled by train and road. It was a smooth journey and we are also visiting Doodhpathri and other places," he said.

Tourism stakeholders said hotels, | [More on P6](#)

CS reviews rehabilitation measures taken for migrant populations in J&K

Orders immediate handover of completed transit accommodations among employees

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JUNE 08: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Monday chaired a meeting to review and address various issues pertaining to PM Package employees serving in the Kashmir Division, with a focus on transit accommodation, career progression, rehabilitation measures and welfare initiatives for displaced communities.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Finance; Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works Department; Principal Secretary, DMRR&R; Commissioner Secretary, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs; Commissioner Secretary, Planning; Commissioner Secretary, GAD; Secretary, Revenue; Secretary, Rural Development Department; Secretary, Transport; Relief Commissioner (Migrants); Chief Engineers of R&B Department; representatives of various departments and senior officers of DMRR&R.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary took a detailed review of the transit accommodation infrastructure created for PM Package employees across different districts of Kashmir. Stressing the need for optimal utilization of the facilities, he directed that all completed flats be allotted and occupied at the earliest. He instructed the Relief Commissioner (Migrants) to ensure that



all completed accommodations are taken over by the eligible employees by the end of July this year without fail. The Chief Secretary also reviewed the status of flats under construction at various sites. He further examined the status of allied infrastructure and utility services including electricity, drinking water supply, internal road connectivity, boundary walls and Sewage Treatment Plants

(STPs) to ensure that the colonies are fully functional and habitable. The meeting also discussed plans for operation and maintenance (O&M) of the transit accommodations as well as migrant colonies in Jammu. Deliberations were held on creation of additional accommodation facilities in Jammu, with land identified at Purkhoo for expansion. Reviewing the service-related

issues of PM Package employees, the Chief Secretary took stock of matters concerning promotions, preparation of seniority lists and inter-district transfers within the Kashmir Division. Departments presented cadre-wise details of PM Package employees and informed the meeting about the status of Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs) and related service matters. Several other issues concerning the welfare and rehabilitation of displaced persons were also discussed. These included cases under the Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme (RAS) relating to deceased employees, provision of adequate budgetary support for operation and maintenance of migrant colonies by line departments, and development of an integrated online portal for digitization of records of displaced communities including Kashmiri Pandits, West Pakistan Refugees (WPRs) and families displaced from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK).

The Principal Secretary, DMRR&R, Chandraker Bharti gave the meeting a comprehensive overview of the rehabilitation and resettlement initiatives being undertaken by the Department. He informed that the department has prepared a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for operation and maintenance of migrant colonies across Jammu and Kashmir divisions and that works would be taken up after completion of the requisite formalities. He

further apprised the meeting that the PoJK Bhawan at Suketar has achieved nearly 50 percent physical progress and is targeted for completion by January next year. He also informed that the Community Hall at Jagti has reached around 90 percent completion and is nearing completion.

Relief Commissioner (Migrants), Dr. Arvind Karwani, informed the meeting that out of the sanctioned 6,000 transit flats for PM Package employees, 4,648 flats have been completed while construction of the remaining 1,352 flats is in progress. He further stated that 3,257 flats have so far been allotted to eligible employees, including 532 allotments made since the last review held in March this year.

He also briefed the meeting on the status of allied works and utility services being developed to make all transit accommodation colonies fully ready for occupation and use by PM Package employees.

The Chief Secretary reiterated the Government's commitment towards ensuring dignified living conditions, timely resolution of service-related concerns and strengthening rehabilitation measures for displaced communities. He called upon all departments to work in close coordination for expeditious completion of pending works and prompt resolution of issues affecting PM Package employees and migrant families across Jammu and Kashmir.

100-Day Nasha Mukht Abhiyan

DIPR's Cultural Unit organises Short Play at GBHSS Zainakote



Through an engaging performance, the artists highlighted the devastating consequences of substance abuse on individuals, families and society. The play also focused on the measures being taken by the administration to curb the menace of drug addiction and promote a drug-free society. The programme, as per an official statement, was attended by the students, who actively engaged with the awareness message conveyed through the performance.

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JUNE 08: As part of the ongoing 100-Day Nasha Mukht Abhiyan, the Cultural Unit Kashmir of the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) Monday organised an impactful short play at Government Boys' Higher Secondary School (GBHSS), Zainakote, Srinagar, to raise awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse. Through an engaging performance, the artists highlighted the devastating consequences of substance abuse on individuals, families and society. The play also focused on the measures being taken by the administration to curb the menace of drug addiction and promote a drug-free society. The

programme, as per an official statement, was attended by the students, who actively engaged with the awareness message conveyed through the performance.

The Principal and staff of the institution appreciated the DIPR for conducting such informative and awareness-oriented programmes among the youth. They emphasized the importance of sustained awareness campaigns in preventing drug abuse and encouraging healthy lifestyles among students.

The event forms part of the department's continued efforts to support the objectives of the Nasha Mukht Abhiyan through cultural and educational outreach initiatives across Kashmir.

Khet Bachao Abhiyan Agriculture Deptt organises awareness camp in Shopian

KT NEWS DESK

SHOPIAN, JUNE 08: Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shopian, in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Shopian Monday organized one-day awareness programme under the month-long national flagship campaign "Khet Bachao Abhiyan" at the Auditorium Hall of Government Degree College, Shopian. Month-long national flagship programme "Khet Bachao Abhiyan" was launched on June 1, 2026 and will continue until June 30, 2026, with the objective of promoting soil conservation, sustainable agriculture, and improved farmer awareness across the district.

The programme, as per an official statement, was presided over by Agri-Chemist, Ravinder Kumar Tripathi and attended by officers from the Agriculture Department, allied departments, KVK Shopian, and a large number of farmers from across the district.

Addressing the gathering, Ravinder Kumar Tripathi highlighted the significance of the month-long campaign and stated that the Agriculture Department is conducting awareness programmes throughout the district to encourage sustainable farming practices and strengthen soil health management. He emphasized the need for the judicious use of pesticides and fertilizers to maintain ecological balance, enhance soil fertility, and ensure long-term agricultural sustainability.

During the programme, experts provided detailed guidance on the scientific and balanced use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, stressing the importance of minimizing excessive chemical applications to protect public health and the environment. Farmers were encouraged to adopt eco-friendly and soil-friendly agricultural practices that contribute to sustainable crop production and environmental conservation.

The awareness session also focused on the promotion of integrated nutrient management, responsible pesticide usage, soil health improvement, and conservation-oriented farming practices. Experts explained that sustainable agricultural practices help improve soil structure, enhance nutrient availability, reduce environmental pollution, and ensure better productivity over the long term.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from farmers and other agricultural stakeholders, who actively interacted with experts and expressed their commitment to adopting sustainable and soil-friendly farming practices in their fields. Participants pledged to disseminate awareness regarding soil health management and responsible input use among fellow farmers for the benefit of future generations. Among others present on the occasion were Prof. Zaffar Afroz Badri, Head, KVK Shopian; Rafiq Ahmad, Chief Agriculture Officer, Munner Ahmad, Chief Horticulture Officer; Gh. Mohiuddin, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer; and officers and officials from various line departments.

Motorized Tricycles distributed among persons with disabilities in Kulgam

KT NEWS DESK

KULGAM, JUNE 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, Monday distributed motorized tricycles among five persons with disabilities at the Mini-Secretariat, Kulgam.

The distribution camp was organized by the Social Welfare Department, Kulgam, as part of its ongoing efforts to empower persons with disabilities and enhance their mobility and independence. Speaking on the occasion, the

Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, underscored the importance of ensuring equal opportunities and dignity for persons with disabilities. He stated that the provision of assistive devices such as motorized tricycles not only improves mobility but also strengthens confidence, self-reliance, and social inclusion among beneficiaries.

District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) Kulgam, Rameez Ahmad, along with other concerned officials were present during the distribution programme.



KU observes 9th World Bicycle Day



KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, June 8: The University of Kashmir (KU) on Sunday celebrated the 9th World Bicycle Day with an on-campus bicycle rally under the theme "Cycling for a Greener Future."

The event was organized by the Directorate of Physical Education and Sports (DPE&S) KU in line with the directions of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, and the Association of Indian Universities (AIU).

The rally, as per a KU statement, witnessed overwhelming participation from faculty members, administrative staff, students, children from the Kashmir University Model High School, residents of the campus including Mirza Bagh, and members of civil society, reflecting a collective resolve to promote eco-friendly mobility and fitness.

In her message Vice Chancellor KU Prof Nilofer Khan lauded the enthusiastic participation of all stakeholders and emphasized the significance of such initiatives in fostering environmental consciousness and physical well-being.

She urged participants to actively embrace cycling as a sustainable mode of transport

and a healthy lifestyle choice. The rally was flagged off by Registrar, KU Prof. Naseer Iqbal, from the iconic Allama Iqbal Library.

The participants cycled through across the campus, including the picturesque Naseem Bagh, enjoying both the natural beauty of the University and the spirit of the occasion.

Highlighting the multiple benefits of cycling Prof Naseer Iqbal noted that besides promoting physical fitness, cycling contributes significantly towards reducing carbon emissions and conserving resources.

He also encouraged greater use of bicycles in daily life, especially in the backdrop of austerity measures across the country. Earlier, Coordinator DPE&S KU, Dr. Surjeet Singh, welcomed the participants and presented a detailed overview of the programme.

Dr. Singh informed that the Directorate contemplates to organize a series of bicycle rallies and awareness programmes in the coming weeks aimed at encouraging students and employees to adopt active and healthy lifestyles while contributing towards a cleaner and greener environment.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B MECHANICAL DIVISION NORTH KASHMIR BARAMULLA

E-NIT No. R&B/MDNK/NIT/09 Dated: 05/06/2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of J&K Union Territory, Executive Engineer PW(R&B) Mechanical Division North Kashmir Baramulla invites e-tenders in two (02) cover system, from original equipment manufacturers (OEM)/ firms having relevant experience in the field of establishing Mechanized Windrow Composting Units for the below mentioned work:-

S. No.	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (in Lakh)	Cost of T/Doc. (in Rs)	Earnest Money @ 2% of Adv. Cost (in Rs)	Time of Completion	Class of Contractor	Position of Funds
1.	Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 1000 Kg Per Hour capacity Mechanized					OEM/ firms having relevant experience in the field of establishing Mechanized	Available with the intending department as
	Windrow Composting unit at Fruit and Vegetable Mandi Potushay, Bandipora under HADP.	74.40	1600	1,48,800/=	90 Days	Windrow Composting Units or their authorized dealers	per the AAA

Intending Authority: Directorate of Horticulture (P&M) J&K.
Administrative Approval: Accorded by the Financial Commissioner Additional Chief Secretary Agricultural Production Department J&K vide Govt. order No. 05-JK (APD) of 2023 Dated: 02-01-2023
Technical Sanction: Accorded by Superintending Engineer, Mechanical and Hospital Engineering Department Kashmir vide order no. SEMHK/TS-14/04 Dated 25/05/2026
The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website <http://jktenders.gov.in> as per below schedule:

S. No.	Particulars	Date & Time
1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	06/06/2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 06/06/2026 (10:00Hrs) To 27/06/2026(18:00Hrs)
3	Pre-bid meeting (online/offline)	10/06/2026 (11:30Hrs) in the office of the Executive Engineer PW(R&B) Mechanical Division North Kashmir Baramulla
4	Bid submission Start Date & Time	13/06/2026 (10:00 Hrs)
5	Bid Submission End Date & Time	27/06/2026 upto 18:00 Hrs
6	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	29/06/2026 on or after 14:00 Hrs. in the Office of the Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Mechanical Division North Kashmir Baramulla.
7	Date & time of opening of Financial Bids (Online)	To be notified after technical bid evaluation is completed.

DIPK-1920/26
DATED: 08-06-2026

Sd= Executive Engineer PWD(R&B)
Mechanical Division North Kashmir, Baramulla

Defence Secy visits Leh

Reviews operational preparedness, infrastructure



KNO

Srinagar, Jun 08: Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh reviewed operational preparedness and infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control during a three-day visit to the strategically sensitive Leh sector from June 5 to 7, the Defence Ministry said.

During his visit, Singh held detailed discussions with senior military

commanders at the Headquarters of 14 Corps, focusing on operational readiness, border infrastructure development and logistical sustainability in Eastern Ladakh.

In a tweet, PRO and Spokesperson of the Ministry of Defence, Jammu Region, said he also travelled to forward areas, including Base Camp and the Northern Glacier, where he interacted with

troops deployed in high-altitude conditions.

The Defence Secretary commended their dedication, courage and professionalism in safeguarding the nation's borders under challenging terrain and harsh weather conditions.

The visit comes amid continued efforts to strengthen infrastructure and enhance operational capabilities along the northern borders—(KNO)

Several delegations call on LG Sinha



KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, June 08: Dr. Vikas Padha, Senior Joint Replacement Surgeon at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Narayana Super-speciality Hospital, called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday.

Dr. Padha apprised the Lieutenant Governor about the completion of 100 joint replacement surgeries on patients from remote areas of Poonch and Rajouri under the Ayushman Bharat SEHAT Scheme. The Lieutenant Governor congratulated Dr. Padha and his team on the achievement and wished them continued success in their endeavors towards serving the society.

In the meantime, Mufti Nasir-ul-Islam, Grand Mufti of Jammu Kashmir also called on Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha. Meanwhile, Haamid Bukhari, Registrar of Companies, J&K called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

Dr. Abida War, Chairperson, J&K Solace Employees Working Women Association (JKSEWWA) also met the Lieutenant Governor at Lok Bhavan.

'Punjab livestock transport extortion lingers as tender deadline looms'

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jun 08: The Kashmir Mutton Dealers Association (KMDA) on Monday said the long-pending issue of alleged extortion and excessive fee collection at Punjab checkpoints continues unresolved even as the annual fee collection tender is set to expire later this month.

The association urged the Jammu & Kashmir government to intervene immediately to prevent further financial burden on livestock traders and ensure smooth transportation of animals into the Valley.

KMDA General Secretary Mehraj-ud-Din said mutton dealers have repeatedly raised concerns over what they called as "unjustified collections" from vehicles transporting livestock from Punjab to Jammu & Kashmir.

He said traders have been paying huge sums to move livestock-carrying vehicles through Punjab checkpoints, but despite repeated representations, no concrete resolution has emerged so far.

"The annual tender is now about to expire this month. Earlier also, we raised the issue of extortion and excessive collections in Punjab, but



nothing substantial was done. The government must intervene before the new contract is finalised," Mehraj-ud-Din said.

He said in the previous year, nearly Rs 17-18 crore had been collected from mutton dealers and transporters under the existing arrangement, significantly increasing the cost of livestock transportation and affecting the Valley's meat trade.

"If the government acts now, something can still be done before the process is renewed again. Otherwise the burden on traders and consumers will continue," he added.

The KMDA also said the issue had already created uncertainty in livestock supply chains. Dealers remain apprehensive over transportation costs and alleged harassment during movement of livestock vehicles. Notably, the latest remarks come weeks after differences surfaced between the government

and mutton dealers over Eid preparedness, with the administration claimed sufficient stock and advance planning while traders alleged that stakeholders were not taken into confidence regarding livestock movement issues from Punjab.

Earlier, the association had questioned the status of communications reportedly sent by the J&K administration to Punjab authorities regarding transport-related grievances, saying no formal update was shared with traders.

The issue of livestock transportation through Punjab has remained contentious since the past year, with Kashmir-based dealers alleging overcharging, stoppages and harassment at various checkpoints.

Meanwhile, the minister for food civil supplies and consumer affairs was not available for comments as the story will be updated with his comments—(KNO)

GMC Jammu performs free paediatric cardiac surgeries

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Jammu, Jun 08: In a significant achievement for healthcare services in Jammu and Kashmir, the Super Speciality Hospital (SSH) at Government Medical College Jammu is successfully performing complex paediatric cardiac surgeries for children born with congenital heart defects, offering advanced treatment free of cost under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme, reducing the need for families to travel outside the Union Territory.

According to hospital officials, children ranging in age from one year to 18 years from various districts have undergone successful surgeries at the institution. Conditions treated include Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA), Coarctation of Aorta, Atrial Septal Defect (ASD), Ventricular Septal Defect (VSD), and complex disorders such as Tetralogy of Fallot.

Dr Shyam Singh, Head of the Department of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery, speaking with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said operating on children requires exceptional precision. "The heart tissues of these



children are extremely delicate and require meticulous suturing. Their blood volume is very low, which demands careful attention while managing the heart-lung machine. Every step requires precision and teamwork."

Dr Puja Vimesh, Head of the Department of Cardiac Thoracic Anaesthesiology, highlighted the critical role of anaesthesia and post-operative care. "Administering anaesthesia to a child undergoing open-heart surgery is among the most demanding responsibilities. Successful recovery reflects close coordination

between anaesthesia, surgical, and perfusion teams," she said.

One notable recent case involved a seven-year-old child from Poonch suffering from severe breathlessness, recurrent chest infections, and symptoms of heart failure. Doctors diagnosed a large Ventricular Septal Defect (VSD). After careful pre-operative stabilisation, the child underwent open-heart surgery on May 18, 2026, with the defect successfully repaired using a surgical patch under cardiopulmonary bypass. The child made a smooth recovery and was discharged in stable condition.

Apart from conventional

open-heart procedures, the department has adopted minimally invasive surgical techniques, performing selected operations through small incisions on the right side of the chest, reducing surgical trauma and enhancing cosmetic outcomes.

Medical experts said many children were previously brought to hospitals at advanced stages due to financial limitations. The Ayushman Bharat Scheme has significantly improved access to timely and affordable treatment. Hospital authorities credited the success to the collective efforts of multiple departments, including CVTS, Cardiac Anaesthesia, Perfusion Services, and Critical Care Nursing, along with support from Medical Superintendent Dr Rehana Khurshid.

According to health experts, the successful treatment of complex cases marks a major milestone in strengthening specialised healthcare services within Jammu and Kashmir, ensuring that children with congenital heart diseases receive timely intervention for healthier and more productive lives—(KNO)

Sports key to steering youth from drugs: ADGP Jain



REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Srinagar, Jun 08: Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Armed J&K, Anand Jain, on Monday said channelising the energy of youth towards sports and constructive activities is important to keep them away from drugs and other social evils.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of the ongoing Asian Games selection trials at the Indoor Stadium Srinagar, ADGP Jain said a large number of youngsters are

participating in the trials, reflecting the growing attraction of youth towards sports activities.

He said the sporting events are also becoming an important part of the ongoing "Nasha Mukti Abhiyan" aimed at creating awareness against drug abuse among youth.

"The national-level selection trials being held here are sending a positive message to society. Many new players have participated in the trials and it is encouraging to see youth gradually getting attracted towards sports," he said.

Jain said increasing participation of youth in sports and other constructive activities would eventually help reduce the demand side of drug abuse.

"As the involvement of youth in sports activities increases, the tendency towards drugs will decrease. Youth should stay away from drugs and devote their lives to positive and constructive activities," he added.

The ADGP said sports not only help maintain physical fitness but also play a vital role in discipline, confidence-building and personality development among youngsters—(KNO)

GMC Srinagar issues public health advisory

- Says Chronic stress a biological response harming health
- High cortisol linked to heart disease, diabetes

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Jun 08: In an effort to raise awareness about the growing impact of stress-related health issues, the Department of Community Medicine at Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar has issued a public advisory highlighting the dangers of persistently elevated cortisol levels and the simple lifestyle measures that can help keep the stress hormone under control.

The awareness message, issued in the public interest by Dr S. Muhammad Salim Khan, Professor and Head of the Department of Community Medicine, GMC Srinagar, highlights that chronic stress is not merely an emotional issue but a biological response that can significantly affect both physical and mental health if left unmanaged.

Cortisol, often referred to as the body's primary stress hormone, plays a vital role in regulating metabolism, blood pressure, immune function, and the body's response to stress. However, experts warn that prolonged elevation of cortisol levels can lead to a wide range of health



complications.

According to the advisory, chronic high cortisol contributes to increased inflammation in the body and has been linked to conditions such as arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses. It can also raise blood sugar and blood pressure levels, increasing the risk of metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular diseases.

Health experts said that excessive cortisol weakens the immune system, making individuals more vulnerable to infections such as

colds and flu while slowing down wound healing. "Persistent stress can also disrupt sleep patterns, resulting in insomnia, poor-quality sleep, and daytime fatigue," they said.

The advisory highlights that elevated cortisol levels can contribute to abdominal weight gain, particularly around the waist, even among individuals maintaining a relatively normal diet. Prolonged exposure to high cortisol can also affect brain function by impairing memory, reducing concentration, and impacting

cognitive performance. Mental health consequences are equally significant, with chronic stress and elevated cortisol associated with anxiety, depression, irritability, mood swings, and reduced emotional well-being.

The GMC Srinagar advisory points out that many common aspects of modern life unknowingly contribute to rising cortisol levels. Irregular sleep schedules, waking up late, and sleep deprivation can elevate cortisol levels even after a single poor night's sleep.

"Constant multitasking, rushing through daily activities, and living in a state of urgency can keep the body's stress response activated throughout the day. Excessive use of smartphones, laptops, and other digital devices, particularly during late evening hours, exposes individuals to blue light and continuous notifications that may increase stress and interfere with healthy sleep cycles," it states.

The advisory also warns against skipping breakfast or going long hours without eating, as falling blood sugar levels can trigger the release of cortisol.

Excessive consumption of tea and coffee, especially after midday, may further aggravate stress responses because caffeine stimulates the body's stress pathways. Other factors identified include traffic congestion, noise pollution, overcrowding, excessive exercise without adequate recovery, persistent negative thinking, and alcohol consumption, all of which can contribute to sustained elevations in cortisol.

Despite the health risks associated with chronic stress, medical experts emphasise that cortisol levels can be effectively managed through consistent lifestyle modifications.

The advisory recommends maintaining a fixed sleep schedule with seven to eight hours of quality sleep nightly, eating regular meals (particularly avoiding breakfast skipping), engaging in moderate physical activity such as 30 minutes of walking or yoga daily, practicing deep breathing exercises for at least five minutes during stressful situations, limiting caffeine intake after

Continued on
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130th Urs of Hazrat Mian Nizam-ud-Din Kiyarvi concludes

RAJA SYED RATHER

Kangan, Jun 08: The two-day 130th annual Urs of revered Sufi saint Hazrat Mian Nizam-ud-Din Kiyarvi (RA) concluded on Monday at Baba Nagri Wangath in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district amid a massive gathering of devotees from across Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country.

The religious congregation witnessed an overwhelming influx of pilgrims who offered special prayers for peace, prosperity, brotherhood, communal harmony and the well-being of humanity. Devotees from Poonch, Rajouri, Mendhar, Surankote, Kalakote, Uri, Pahalgam, Banderpora, Kokernag, Kulgam, Kishtwar, Punjab, Ludhiana, Doda, Shopian, Kupwara and several regions of Jammu, besides visitors from outside Jammu and Kashmir, attended the annual congregation. The concluding ceremony

was marked by an emotionally charged and spiritually uplifting atmosphere, with night-long prayers, Qur'an recitations, Durood-o-Azkaar and the Khitab al-Mu'azzamat, one of the major sermons of the Urs.

A devotee from Poonch, Irshad said that they travel to Baba Nagri every year to seek blessings and spiritual guidance.

"The atmosphere here strengthens our faith and promotes the message of peace and brotherhood," he said.

Another devotee from Rajouri, Mughal Javid, said the teachings of Hazrat Mian Nizam-ud-Din Kiyarvi (RA) continue to unite people from different regions. "We pray for peace, prosperity and harmony in Jammu and Kashmir."

Addressing the gathering, Sajjada Nashin Mian Altaf Ahmad - senior National Conference leader and the Member of Parliament -

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EDITORIAL

The Final Push Against Drugs

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has now led the anti-drug padyatra across all 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir. This is not a small achievement. It shows that the administration is serious, that the fight against drugs is not confined to a few cities, and that no corner of the Union Territory has been left untouched. In 57 days, the message has reached every district. Now, with 43 days remaining, the movement has entered its final and

most crucial phase. The numbers speak for themselves. Over 1,130 smugglers arrested, more than 1,000 FIRs registered, over 100 properties attached, 700 driving licences cancelled, and 130 passports marked for revocation. This is a systematic dismantling of the drug network. The LG has made it clear that the 'not my problem' mindset will no longer work. Drug smugglers thrive on public silence. The moment communities speak up, the smugglers lose their cover. The next

43 days require a shift from government action to public participation. Every panchayat, every ward, every lane, and every household must become a frontline warrior against drugs. It is time to mobilise youth clubs and putting women in leadership positions. Mothers and sisters have the most to lose when addiction destroys families. They must now lead the campaign at the village level. Border districts like Poonch face an additional challenge. Cross-border

drug smuggling is not just a health issue; it is a security issue. The money from narcotics finances terrorism. The LG has rightly linked the drug menace to narco-terrorism. This is not just about saving youth from addiction. It is about cutting off the funding that fuels violence and instability. The newly issued SOP gives law enforcement a free hand. Passports, driving licences, arms licences, and Aadhaar of smugglers will be cancelled. Their movable and immovable

assets will be attached under the NDPS Act. These are powerful deterrents. But enforcement alone cannot win this war. The LG has emphasised giving youth a purpose through education, skills, and sports. The road ahead is long, but the determination is strong. The padyatra has covered every district. Now the people must carry the movement forward. The next 43 days will decide if J&K becomes truly drug-free. The mission is clear. e system cannot afford to fail them.

India's Health Transformation: Towards Universal Health Coverage

In the past 12 years, the Government has significantly strengthened India's health system. It has insured over 44 crore families and operationalised over 1.86 lakh primary care centres. Generic medicines are now available at rates 50-90% below market price through over 18,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras. Over 47 crore telemedicine consultations have been delivered. Medical colleges in India have more than doubled. Twelve new AIIMS are functional since 2014. Maternal and child mortality rates have dropped significantly. TB incidence has fallen and malaria mortality is down 78%.

Ayushman Bharat: Universal Health Coverage for Every Citizen
Ayushman Bharat provides affordable, quality healthcare to people from all walks of life. It rests on four key pillars.
Pillar 1: AB-PMJAY
Launched in 2018, AB-PMJAY provides free public health insurance up to 5 lakh per family per year to socio-economically deprived families (about 40% of the population). In October 2024, the scheme was extended to all senior citizens above 70 years through Ayushman Bharat Vay Vandana.

- 44.14 crore Ayushman Cards created
- 12.03 crore hospitalisations covered
- Treatment worth 1,80,435 crore provided
- 36,218 hospitals empanelled
- 1.20 crore senior citizens enrolled under Vay Vandana

Pillar 2: Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAM)

AAMs provide primary healthcare at every neighbourhood, offering 12 free services including maternal and child healthcare, NCD screening, mental health support, tele-consultations, and free essential medicines.

- 1.86+ lakh AAMs functional
- Cumulative footfall of over 540 crores

Pillar 3: PM-ABHIM

Launched on October 25, 2021, with a total financial outlay of 64,180 crores (2021-22 to 2025-26), PM-ABHIM builds pandemic preparedness infrastructure including:

- Support for 23,224 rural health and wellness centres in 10 high-focus states
- 13,736 urban health and wellness centres
- 3,389 block public health units
- 744 integrated public health labs
- 631 critical care hospital blocks

Pillar 4: Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)

Launched in September 2021, ABDM builds a citizen-centric digital health infrastructure. At its heart is the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) - a unique 14-digit health identity number.

- 20.49 crore ABHA registrations
- 27,328 facilities connected across 36 states and UTs

National Health Mission: Targeting Diseases and Ailments

Maternal and Child Healthcare

- PMSMA: Over 7.47 crore pregnant women examined; 22,349 facilities providing services

- JSY: Encourages facility-based deliveries among poor pregnant women

- JSSK: Free delivery, drugs, diagnostics, diet, and transport at public facilities

These programmes have significantly reduced maternal mortality rates.

Mission Indradhanush

Launched in 2014 as a catch-up programme for communities with low vaccination rates:

- 5.46 crore children and 1.32 crore pregnant women vaccinated

- Zero-dose children fell from 0.11% in 2023 to 0.06% in 2024

- India eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus (WHO certified in May 2015)

U-WIN Platform

Launched in 2024 for pan-India rollout:

- 11.87 crore children and 3.96 crore pregnant women registered (as of March 2026)

Eliminating Communicable Diseases

Tuberculosis

India has reduced TB incidence through the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP). TB cases and fatalities have declined faster than the global rate.

- Over 3.78 lakh Nik-shay Mitras supported over 20 lakh patients with over 45 lakh food baskets

- Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan: Over 20 crore individuals screened; more than 28 lakh patients diagnosed since December 2024

Malaria

- National Framework for Malaria Elimination (2016) provides roadmap for eliminating malaria by 2027

- Malaria cases and deaths have dropped significantly since 2017

Other Communicable Diseases

- HIV-AIDS: Mother-to-child transmission declined by about 74.5% between 2010 and 2024

- Kala-Azar: 633 endemic blocks show less than one case per 10,000 population

- Japanese Encephalitis: Case Fatality Rate reduced from 17.6% (2014) to 7.1% (2024)

- Dengue: Case Fatality Rate reduced to 0.13% in 2024

- Leprosy: Districts achieving elimination increased from 542 (2014-15) to 638 (2024-25)

COVID-19 and Pandemic Response

India's pandemic response was among the most proactive:

- Testing labs grew from 14 to 3,400

- ICU beds increased from 2,168 to 1.45 lakh

- Oxygen-supported beds went up from 50,583 to 5.15 lakh

- Domestic PPE manufacturing scaled from zero to more than 5 lakh kits per day

- Under Vaccine Maitri, India supplied about 300 million doses to nearly 100 countries

Non-Communicable Diseases

Screening at AAMs

- Over 60 crore screenings for oral, breast and cervical cancers

- 35.3 crore screened for oral cancer; 2.3 lakh detected

- 16.5 crore screened for breast cancer

- 8.73 crore screened for cervical cancer; 1.1 lakh diagnosed

- 41.5 crore screened for hypertension; 7.1 crore diagnosed

- 41.3 crore screened for diabetes; 4.7 crore found diabetic

Cancer Care

- 19 State Cancer Institutes and 20 Tertiary Cancer Care centres established

- Cancer treatment facilities approved in all 22 new AIIMS

- National cancer surveillance expanded through over 600 cancer registry sites

Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme (PMNDP)

- Rolled out in 2016, providing free dialysis treatment to the poor:

- 31.74 lakh patients received treatment

- Over 4 crore haemodialysis sessions across 1,816 centres

- Saved patients an estimated 10,102.25 crore in out-of-pocket expenses

Prevention: Reducing NCD Risk Factors

- Eat Right India (launched July 2018): 182 Clean Street Food Hubs, 546 Fruits and Vegetables Markets, 411 railway stations certified

- Fit India Movement (launched 2019): Fit India Sundays on Cycle campaign engaged over 30 lakh citizens across over 2.8 lakh locations

- Tobacco Control

- 17.3% reduction in overall tobacco use over the past decade

- Tobacco use among school-going children declined from 14.6% (2009) to 8.5% (2019)

- Over 2,000 Tobacco Cessation Centres established

- National Tobacco QuitLine (1800-112-356) assisted over 6.5 lakh people

Affordable Medicines and Emergency Transport

- Jan Aushadhi Kendras: Over 18,000 Kendras supply generic medicines at 50-80% cheaper prices, saving families an estimated 40,000 crore

- AMRIT Pharmacies: Over 255 outlets, benefited over 6.85 crore patients, saved about 8,400 crore

- Free Essential Diagnostics Initiative (launched 2015): Prescribes free essential tests at every level of public health system

- Emergency ambulances: 3,044

- Advanced Life Support, 15,283 Basic Life Support, 3,918 Patient Transport Vehicles, 19 boats, 81 bikes

- Digital and Last-Mile Health Services

- eSanjeevani (National Telemedicine Service): Launched November 2019

- Over 47 crore calls recorded

- More than 2.34 lakh healthcare providers onboarded

- Tele-MANAS: Launched October 2022 for mental healthcare

- 53 Tele-Manas Cells and 23 Mentoring Institutes connected

- Medical Education and Workforce

- Medical colleges more than doubled; 12 new AIIMS functional since 2014

- MBBS seats increased by 118%; PG seats by 127% (from pre-2014 levels)

- 157 new nursing colleges being established, adding ~15,700 nursing graduates annually

- B.Sc. Nursing seats up 53% to 1,27,290; M.Sc. Nursing seats up 39% to 14,986

- Alternative Healthcare (AYUSH)

- Ministry of AYUSH formed in November 2014

- 942 AYUSH institutions opened (as of 2025)

- AYUSH care mainstreamed across 13,093 NHM co-located facilities

- AYUSH Visa introduced in July 2023 for foreign nationals seeking treatment

- Towards Viksit Bharat 2047

Investments in medical infrastructure, primary healthcare, and medical education have strengthened India's health sector. These efforts are advancing the country towards universal health coverage, fulfilling the government's motto - Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas. India is moving steadily towards Viksit Bharat @ 2047 - a healthier, stronger, and more prosperous nation for every citizen.

Disclaimer: This is an abridged version of the original PIB article "India's Health Transformation" (June 6, 2026). Key facts and data have been retained. For the complete article, please refer to the official PIB website.

4 Years Of Jan Samarth Portal

Expanding access and bringing credit schemes closer to citizens

Launched on 6 June 2022, the Jan Samarth Portal marks 4 years of digital financial inclusion and seamless credit delivery. Regarded as a single-window platform, it simplifies access to institutional credit through technology-driven and user-friendly processes. The portal covers sectors including agriculture, business, housing, renewable energy, and livelihoods. It supports diverse beneficiary groups across the country. Available in multiple languages, Jan Samarth has emerged as an integrated digital ecosystem. The platform promotes accessibility, transparency, and efficient credit facilitation for entrepreneurs, farmers, and livelihood seekers.

The Journey of Jan Samarth Portal
Across India, enterprise ambitions often begin with a simple need: the right support at the right time. From aspiring entrepreneurs and women-led enterprises to young professionals entering the agri-business sector, many require accessible and timely financial support to realise their ambitions. While opportunities existed through government schemes, navigating multiple portals and procedures often remained challenging.

Recognising this need, the Government launched the Jan Samarth Portal as a unique digital platform for credit-linked schemes. It is a first of its kind platform which directly connects lenders with beneficiaries. Since its launch on 6 June 2022, the portal has strengthened ease of access to financial assistance through a simplified

and technology-driven framework. It was conceptualised with the twin objectives of expanding the reach of government-sponsored schemes and streamlining the credit delivery process.

As Jan Samarth completes 4 years of its journey, the portal continues to strengthen financial inclusion through seamless credit delivery.

End-to-End Digital Lending

One Platform, Multiple Languages: English, Hindi, Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Bengali and Kannada

Jan Samarth streamlines the credit application journey through an integrated and user-friendly digital process. It is available in 8 different languages for ease of access to rural and underprivileged population in the country. The portal provides a unified digital gateway for 16 Credit-linked Central Government Schemes application submissions. From agriculture and renewable energy to entrepreneurship and housing, the Portal enables inclusive credit access across diverse sectors and communities.

The portal covers 16 credit-linked central government schemes across various loan categories. Under credit guarantee coverage, the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme 5.0 (ECLGS) is available. Under e-NWR financing, the e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi (EKUN) scheme is offered. For home loans, the portal provides Home Loan for Economically Weaker Section (EWS), Lower Income Group (LIG) and Middle-Income

Group (MIG) in urban areas. For agricultural loans, the Kisan Credit Card and Kisan Credit Card for Fisheries (KCCFIM) are available. Under renewable energy, Roof Top Solar Installation Financing (SOLAR) is offered. For agri-infrastructure loans, the Agri Clinics and Agri Business Centers Scheme (ACABC) and Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) are available. For business activity loans, the portal covers the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), Weaver Mudra Scheme (WMS), Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna (PMMY), Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor Aatmanirbhar Nidhi Scheme (PM SVANidhi), National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE), Loan for Startups (START), and Credit Card for Micro Enterprises (CCME). For livelihood loans, the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) is available.

The portal has also onboarded 269 Member Lending Institutions to choose from, which include 12 Public Sector Banks, 20 Private Sector Banks, 19 Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), 28 Regional Rural Banks, 7 Small Finance Banks, 180 District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs), 2 Scheduled State Co-operative Banks, and 1 All-India Financial Institution.

Simplified Digital Application Process
Available on a 24x7 basis, the portal offers applicants a convenient and time-efficient digital application experience.

With answering few questions, the portal matches the applicant with best suited scheme. The portal checks eligibility and with advanced technologies also auto-fills required details. It gives in-principle sanction and sends the application with documents to the selected Bank branch via in-built automated Business rule engine. It also keeps the beneficiaries updated at each stage of the journey, without necessitating multiple physical visits to bank branches.

Real-time checks across various government databases ensure faster loan processing. Key integration includes Local Government Directory (LGD), UDYAM, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), AgriStack, Startup Portal of DPIIT, LOKOS, etc. For tax related records Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Goods and Services Tax (GST) are also linked. Various regulatory and non-governmental sources are also incorporated in the portal. This includes National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL), National E-Governance Services Ltd. (NeSL), CIBIL, National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC) and Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) etc.

Portal also facilitates assisted mode for submission of loan applications by Bank business correspondents / assisted partners. It can be accessed through website (www.jansamarth.in) and mobile application (available in both android and iOS). A separate mobile application is available for

accessing real-time reports.

Jan Samarth: Scale and Impact

The impact of the Jan Samarth Portal can be seen both in its large-scale credit facilitation and in the entrepreneurial journeys it has enabled across the country.

Since its launch, the Portal has emerged as a key digital platform for expanding access to institutional credit across the country. As on 01 June 2026, around 54.10 lakh applications amounting to 3,00,951 crore have been processed through the portal. Further, banks have accorded digital approvals to 49.55 lakh beneficiaries involving an amount of 2,76,493.78 crore. This reflects the growing reliance on efficient digital credit mechanisms.

Building an Inclusive Credit Ecosystem

Designed as a single-window digital platform, the Jan Samarth Portal is addressing diverse credit requirements. The platform is also expanding opportunities across sectors through efficient and technology-driven ecosystem. Jan Samarth supports entrepreneurs, farmers, small businesses, and livelihood seekers across sectors. By reducing procedural complexities and improving accessibility, it is strengthening ease of access to institutional credit for citizens nationwide. The initiative also ensures end-to-end integration of all activities and processes related to linked government schemes. This reflects the Government's commitment towards digital financial inclusion, efficient credit delivery, and inclusive economic empowerment.

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

Deputy CM discusses farmers' issues with Bharatiya Kisan Union delegation

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 08: Deputy Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Surinder Choudhary, Monday held a detailed discussion with a delegation of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) led by its National Spokesperson, Ch. Rakesh Tikait, regarding various issues concerning the farming community across Jammu and Kashmir.

The delegation, as per an official statement, called on the Deputy Chief Minister at the Civil Secretariat, Srinagar, and submitted a memorandum highlighting several key demands aimed at protecting and strengthening the agricultural, horticultural and allied sectors in Jammu and Kashmir.

During the interaction, the Deputy Chief Minister reiterated the government's commitment towards ensuring sustainable agricultural growth, enhancing farmers' incomes and promoting holistic rural development across Jammu and Kashmir. He gave a patient hearing to the concerns raised by the delegation and assured them that all genuine demands would be examined on priority and taken up with the concerned departments for appropriate action.

Emphasizing the need for stronger institutional support for the farming community, the Deputy Chief Minister called for establishment of Kisan Bhawans in both Srinagar and Jammu to facilitate greater engagement with the farmers and provide an effective platform for addressing their grievances



Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary (right) interacting with the Bharatiya Kisan Union delegation (left) during a meeting at the Civil Secretariat, Srinagar.

and concerns. Highlighting the importance of the horticulture sector to Jammu and Kashmir's economy, he also advocated for introduction of special air-conditioned railway bogies for transportation and export of apples and other perishable produce, ensuring timely and safe access to markets across the country.

The Deputy Chief Minister observed that Jammu and Kashmir possesses immense potential for organic farming and urged the farmers to adopt pesticide-free cultivation practices to enhance the quality, marketability and value of local produce.

The meeting also discussed issues related to imports affecting the local produce, tariff-related concerns, market linkages, transportation bottlenecks and other challenges faced by the farmers and horticulturists.

The memorandum submitted by the BKU sought protection for domestic horticulture through higher import duties on foreign agricultural and horticultural products, particularly apples and other fruits, to safeguard the interests of local

growers. The delegation also demanded enhanced subsidies of up to 90 percent for anti-hail nets to protect orchards from natural calamities.

Among other demands, the BKU urged the government to facilitate dedicated refrigerated railway bogies for transportation of fresh fruits and other perishable commodities, expand modern cold storage infrastructure across major horticultural zones and formulate a comprehensive policy for subsidized fodder and feed support to dairy and poultry farmers.

The delegation further called for transparent and proactive implementation of subsidy schemes, establishment of fruit processing and canning units for value addition of apples and other fruits, strengthening of crop insurance coverage and effective measures to address increasing human-wildlife conflict resulting in crop losses.

The BKU delegation included Yudhvir Singh, General Secretary; Dharamvir Singh, Secretary; Subash Chowdhary and representatives from various districts of Kashmir.

Govt committed to facilitating smooth conduct of religious events: Javid Dar

Reviews Muharram arrangements in Sumbal, Budgam

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 08: In view of the forthcoming observance of Muharram-ul-Haram 2026, Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperatives and Elections, Javid Ahmad Dar, Monday chaired separate review meetings in Sumbal Bandipora and Budgam districts to assess the preparedness of various departments and ensure seamless arrangements for the devotees during the holy month.

At Sumbal, the Minister, as per an official statement, took stock of the arrangements being put in place for the devotees across Sonawari and adjoining areas. The meeting was attended by MLA Sonawari Hilal Akbar Lone, Deputy Commissioner Bandipora Indu Kanwal Chib, senior officers of the civil and police administration, heads of various departments, representatives of Shia organisations, civil society members and other stakeholders.

Deputy Commissioner Bandipora briefed the Minister regarding the measures being undertaken by the district administration for smooth, peaceful and hassle-free observance of Muharram. She informed the meeting about the arrangements related to power supply, drinking water, sanitation, healthcare, road connectivity, traffic management and public distribution services.

Representatives of various Shia organisations and associations projected several issues



Minister Javid Ahmad Dar (right) reviewing Muharram arrangements with officials in Sumbal.

and requirements concerning essential services during the holy month.

The Minister gave a patient hearing to the concerns raised and directed the concerned departments to take immediate and necessary measures for their timely redressal. Emphasising the religious significance of Muharram-ul-Haram and the administration's responsibility towards the public, Javid Dar underscored the need for close inter-departmental coordination to ensure that the devotees do not face any inconvenience during the observance. He instructed the officers to complete all necessary arrangements well in advance and maintain constant monitoring of the facilities being provided.

The Minister laid special emphasis on sanitation and cleanliness around Imambaras, religious congregational sites and procession routes. He directed the Municipal authorities and the Rural Development Department to intensify

cleanliness drives, ensure proper waste management and deploy adequate manpower and machinery throughout the Muharram period. He further instructed all the line departments to ensure uninterrupted delivery of essential services and maintain prompt response mechanisms to address the public grievances.

Reiterating the government's commitment towards facilitating the smooth conduct of religious events, the Minister assured that all genuine demands projected by the representatives would be examined on priority and addressed in a time-bound manner.

Speaking on the occasion, MLA Sonawari Hilal Akbar Lone appreciated the efforts of the district administration and stressed the importance of coordinated action among all departments. He also appealed to the public to extend full cooperation in maintaining the sanctity, discipline and peaceful atmosphere associated with the observance of

Muharram-ul-Haram.

Later, the Minister chaired a comprehensive review meeting in Budgam to assess the arrangements being put in place for the smooth and peaceful observance of Muharram-ul-Haram across the district.

Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Athar Amir Khan, briefed the Minister regarding the preparedness of the district administration. He informed that all necessary measures are being undertaken to ensure the smooth conduct of Muharram-related events and processions.

The Minister directed the concerned officers to ensure that all arrangements are completed well before the commencement of Muharram and that devotees are provided all requisite facilities. He stressed the importance of effective coordination among departments for efficient management of religious gatherings and processions.

Javid Dar emphasised that the government remains fully committed towards facilitating the smooth observance of Muharram while upholding peace, harmony and communal brotherhood. He instructed the officers to remain vigilant, responsive and accessible to the public so that any issues raised by organisers or local residents are addressed promptly and effectively.

The Minister also interacted with the representatives of Muharram committees and local stakeholders, who highlighted various requirements and suggestions regarding the arrangements.

DC Srinagar takes assessment of arrangements for Muharram-ul-Haram



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 08: In preparation for the forthcoming holy month of Muharram-ul-Haram 1448 Hijri, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, Monday undertook an extensive visit to various prominent Imambaras in the City, including Imambaras at Zadibal, Hasanabad Rainawari and Baghwanpora Lalbazar to take a firsthand appraisal of the arrangements being made for the smooth and peaceful observance of Muharram.

The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Aadi Faraed, Joint Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Nuzhat Khurshid, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Superintendent Engineer R&B, Shabir Ahmad, Superintendent Engineer SMC, Sajad Kawasa, Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Tahir Sajad, Executive Engineers of R&B, KPDC, Water Works, and senior Officers from the Departments of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Social Welfare, Fire & Emergency Services, Forest and other line departments.

On the occasion, the DC passed several onspot directions to the line Departments and stressed on elaborate arrangements and sustained efforts facilitating the observance of important proceedings & processions.

Regarding essential services, the DC instructed officers of the KPDC and Water Works Department to ensure uninterrupted electricity and drinking water supply. He directed the Executive Engineer Water Works to keep adequate arrangements for water tankers at locations where additional water supply may be required.

The DC asked the SMC and allied Departments to ensure

all Street lights including High Mass lights around Imambaras are functional well before the start of the Holy month. He also stressed on ensuring cleanliness of lanes and drains inside the compounds of Imambaras, Shrines and roads enroute Procession routes. He also emphasized deployment of dog catching teams around key points.

The officers of the Health Department were asked to keep first aid facilities, Medical teams and Ambulances available in the areas and also accompany the processions to ensure immediate first aid/medical treatment.

At Hasanabad Imambara, the DC took stock of similar arrangements and reiterated the importance of completing all works well in advance. He stressed that every Department must work in close coordination to ensure that devotees and mourners face no difficulties during the observance of Muharram.

The DC also visited Imambara Baghwanpora, Lalbazar, where he again interacted with local representatives and members of the community. He patiently listened to their concerns and developmental demands and issued on-the-spot directions to Officers of various Departments for prompt redressal of issues raised.

At Zadibal Imambara, the DC held a detailed interaction with the local community representatives to have first-hand feedback of the arrangements to be put in place during the Holy Month of Muharram-ul-Haram. He directed the concerned departments to ensure adequate sanitation, lighting, water supply, and other essential services around the shrine premises.

During all visits, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the importance of coordination between the Administration and local committees for the seamless conduct of Muharram observances.

Div Com Kashmir reviews flood mitigation preparedness, disaster management readiness

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 08: In view of the impending monsoon season, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Monday convened a high-level meeting with Deputy Commissioners of the Valley to review flood mitigation measures, disaster preparedness, and the status of emergency response infrastructure across the region.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Deputy Commissioners, senior officers from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), the Irrigation Department, and the Assistant Commissioner Central.

During the review, the Divisional Commissioner assessed the preparedness of districts with regard to updating the India Disaster Resource Network (IDRN) inventory, formulation of contingency plans, availability of rescue shelters, identification of flood-prone villages and low-lying areas, network shadow zones, and the availability of satellite communication sets with field officers. He also reviewed district-wise data on operational helipads, boats, dewatering pumps, awareness programmes, and mock drills conducted to enhance disaster response capabilities.

Emphasising the need for proactive preparedness, the Divisional Commissioner directed all Deputy Commissioners to replenish critical resources and ensure timely updating of the IDRN



Divisional Commissioner Kashmir (left) reviewing flood mitigation preparedness with officials.

portal with details of rescue equipment and other essential resources. He further underscored the importance of round-the-clock functioning of District Emergency Operation Centres and instructed district administrations to formulate comprehensive contingency plans to facilitate swift rescue operations and effective flood mitigation during emergencies.

To strengthen inter-agency coordination, he directed the district administrations to share the geographical coordinates of all operational helipads with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), SDRF, Police, and the Army.

Special instructions were issued to the district administrations of Ganderbal and Anantnag to undertake Yatra-specific disaster management preparations to ensure the safety and security of pilgrims

during the forthcoming pilgrimage season.

The Divisional Commissioner also instructed the Deputy Commissioner Baramulla to facilitate the allotment of land for the establishment of a permanent SDRF deployment at Gulmarg, aimed at enhancing emergency response capacity in the tourist destination.

Also, he urged all Deputy Commissioners to convene meetings of their respective District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) to strengthen inter-departmental coordination, optimise resource sharing, and sensitise all stakeholders regarding disaster preparedness and response mechanisms.

He stressed on ensuring a coordinated response framework to effectively tackle any flood-related exigencies during the monsoon season.

DC Pulwama reviews Mission YUVA implementation

KT News Desk

PULWAMA, JUNE 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom, Monday chaired a comprehensive review meeting at the Administrative Complex, Pulwama to assess the implementation and progress of Mission YUVA (Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan) across the district.

Mission YUVA is a flagship initiative of the Government of Jammu & Kashmir aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment among youth by providing awareness, capacity building, credit linkage and enterprise support.

At the outset, Assistant Director Employment, Pulwama presented a detailed presentation highlighting the progress achieved under various components of Mission YUVA, including Udyam Jagriti 4.0 awareness campaigns, capacity-building initiatives, entrepreneurship promotion, credit linkage, loan disbursement, enterprise mentorship and mobilisation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Lakhpati Didis.

The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the block-wise and bank-wise performance under the Mission and stressed the need for accelerating efforts to ensure that the benefits of the scheme reach all eligible youth and aspiring entrepreneurs. He directed all concerned departments, banking institutions and implementing agencies to work in close coordination for timely processing of applications, speedy sanction and disbursement of loans and effective

handholding of beneficiaries.

Emphasising the importance of Udyam Jagriti, Dr. Qayoom directed the Udyam Jagriti Nodal Officers and concerned departments to further intensify awareness campaigns and training programmes with special focus on students, youth and SHG members so that every eligible youth is informed about the opportunities available under Mission YUVA. He said that Udyam Jagriti programme under Mission YUVA aims to create awareness about entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities and motivate youth to become job creators rather than job seekers.

The Deputy Commissioner also emphasized the importance of mobilising Self-Help Groups and Lakhpati Didis under the Mission. He directed the NRLM functionaries and concerned officers to facilitate the transition of SHGs into sustainable enterprises through proper mentoring, credit linkage and market support. He called for focused outreach among women entrepreneurs and urged officials to ensure that SHG members and Lakhpati Didis are encouraged to avail the benefits of the scheme.

Dr. Qayoom further emphasised the need for continuous monitoring of sanctioned cases and effective enterprise mentorship to ensure the sustainability and growth of ventures established under the Mission. He also directed banks to expedite the disposal of applications within the prescribed timelines and maintain regular follow-up with applicants.

PM-AJAY outreach connects rural youth with career, self-employment opportunities in Bharderwah

Amir Iqbal Khan

Bharderwah, Jun 8: In a major push towards youth empowerment and socio-economic advancement, the Department of Social Welfare Doda on Monday organised a mega career counselling and awareness programme under the Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM-AJAY) at PM SHRI Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Bhalra here.

The initiative, aimed at bridging the gap between rural youth and government welfare schemes, saw multi-departmental



Group of students and officials participating in PM-AJAY outreach program in Bharderwah.

enthusiastic participation from hundreds of students, NCC cadets, local residents and faculty members who were sensitized about various self-employment avenues, vocational training and financial assistance models.

Highlighting the core objectives of the scheme, Associate NCC Officer Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Koul, who also delivered the welcome address, urged the youth to proactively leverage these state sponsored initiatives.

"This programme is a pivotal step towards educational and professional growth. Students and NCC cadets must step

forward to avail themselves of the immense opportunities being provided across different sectors for their socio-economic upliftment," Dr. Koul said.

During the technical sessions, resource persons and domain experts from the participating line departments held interactive sessions with the participants.

Officials including Tehsil Social Welfare Officer (TSWO) Shahnawaz Ahmed, alongside experts from agriculture and veterinary sciences, delved into banking literacy, entrepreneurship setups, livestock development and skill-upgradation modules.

GDC Qazigund hosts national colloquium on contemporary ecological issues

Experts call for reviving man-nature relation

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 08: In connection with World Environment Day, the College Eco Club "College Green Corps" of Government Degree College Qazigund organised a national colloquium on "Contemporary Ecological Issues: Challenges and Strategies" in collaboration with the Ecosophical Foundation of Literature and Environment (EFSLE), marking the first-ever national event of the college.

Academicians from across the country participated, including Dr. Rishikesh Kumar Singh (President, EFSLE, New Delhi), Dr. Amit Ranjan (NCERT, Delhi), Prof. Shruti Das (Ex-HoD, English, Behrampur University, Odisha), Dr. Asha Tiwari (Bharati College, University of Delhi), Dr. Satya Prakash (Mahatma Gandhi Govt. College, Andaman & Nicobar Islands), Dr. Kiran Bhairannavar (University of Delhi), and Dr. Aishwarya Maindola (Clinical Psychologist, New Delhi).

Prof. Veda Sharan, former Professor of English and Foreign Languages University Hyderabad, delivered the keynote address, stating that "applying an ecosophical lens means evaluating language against an explicit ethical framework that prioritizes the health of the whole ecosystem, rather than solely catering to human utility. Man-Nature relation needs to be revived in its



original form to tackle the challenges to environment which have arisen due to the greed of materialism."

In his presidential remarks, Prof. Sudhir Singh, Principal of the college, thanked the expert academicians and noted that culture poses a big challenge to nature, with nature responding in its ugliest forms like storms and droughts. "Our major three challenges are climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. All these are inextricably linked. Healthy forests alone would enable carbon sinks; embracing circularity, reusing, recycling and waste reduction shall restore our ecosystems," he added. Dr. Rishikesh Singh touched

upon the psychological aspects, discussing the concept of Empirical Tabula Rasa through which an individual tries to disconnect and reconnect with nature, and pointed out issues related to ecophobia where an individual gets affected by past sufferings from natural calamities and disasters.

The post-lunch brainstorming session was chaired by Prof. Shruti Das, who deliberated on "The Power of the Sublime: An ecopsychological exploration of Lauren Groff's novel The Vaster Wilds." She spoke on the importance of conceiving nature as part of one's own existence and gave examples of changemakers like Wangari Mathai and

Jadav Payen (the Forest Man of India), showing that sustainability is possible and reversing climate change is achievable through determined positive eco-strategies. The event began with a welcome address by Convener Dr. Aulfaq A. Zargar, with proceedings conducted by Prof. Nehad K. Fatima, HoD English. Presentations by experts were followed by healthy discussions in which students from the host college and neighboring schools participated. A vote of thanks was proposed by Prof. Rameez Ahmad Shah, Nodal Club Coordinator of College Green Corps. Rose bushes were planted on the campus by the guests on the occasion.

'Severe' explosion kills 8 workers in Vizag Steel Plant

PM Modi, CM Naidu condole deaths

PTI

Visakhapatnam, Jun 08: A sudden, "severe" explosion in Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (Vizag Steel Plant) here killed eight workers and injured six more on Monday.

According to a Press Information Bureau press release, the explosion occurred around 4:15 pm in the steel plant's Steel Melt Shop-1.

"Before slide gate opening to pour hot crude steel from Ladle to Tundish, which could eventually have gone to caster, sudden severe explosion took place. Eight persons succumbed to injuries. Six more persons are injured and admitted to the hospital undergoing treatment," it said.

Following the explosion, a severe ball of fire rose up to the ceiling and the overhead crane caught fire.

"RINL is investigating the accident. In addition, a 3-member external enquiry committee led by Director-in-charge Bokaro of SAIL has also been assigned to enquire into the accident," said the press release.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the incident and also extended ex-gratia to the kin of the deceased and injured workers.

"Saddened by the mishap at the Vizakhapatnam Steel Plant. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. Praying that the injured recover at the

earliest," he said in a post on X.

An ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh from Prime Minister National Relief Fund (PMNRF) would be given to the next of kin of each deceased, he said, adding that the injured would be given Rs 50,000.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said the steel plant accident left him deeply shocked.

"I am distressed to learn that several workers have lost their lives in this accident. I have spoken to the concerned officials and directed them to undertake relief measures in coordination with all government departments," the CM said in a post on X.

According to Visakhapatnam collector M Abhishek Kishore, two of the six injured are in a critical condition while the remaining are out of danger.

He observed that the six injured workers were shifted to two private hospitals in the port city.

Kishore said the situation is under control and other operations in the affected facility are suspended, leaving "no more scope for further accidents."

According to the police, molten iron spilt on to workers.

Police said the molten iron was extremely hot at about 1,600 degrees Celsius.

Minister of State for Steel B Srinivasa Varma told reporters that Union Minister of Heavy Industries and Steel H D Kumaraswamy will reach here

by midnight.

"Today's disaster in the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is the most unfortunate development. How did the blast occur or if the ladle had broken, we will try to ascertain these causes in a day or two," he said, adding that he will also go to the port city.

Right now, the accident site is out of bounds, he said, observing that they will review the situation in the plant and try to take necessary actions.

Meanwhile, a representative of the steel plant workers told a vernacular television that molten metal brought from the blast furnace is normally reheated to extremely high temperatures before being transported in a ladle to another unit for processing.

He said that the molten steel spilled from the ladle during the transfer process, triggering a massive fire and forcing workers in the vicinity to flee. "Three workers died on the spot and some of the injured succumbed while being shifted to the hospital," he said.

Incidentally, the accident occurred during a shift-change period, making it difficult to immediately ascertain the exact number of personnel present in the area at the time of the incident. However, the latest incident is being described as unprecedented in terms of a ladle-related accident involving molten steel.

Sarmad Hafeez reviews progress on Vibrant Village Prog-2 in Kunan-Poshpora

KT News Desk

Kupwara Jun 08: Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare Department, Sarmad Hafeez, on Monday visited Kunan-Poshpora in Kupwara district to review progress on Vibrant Villages Programme-2 (VVP). Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, along with other concerned officers, accompanied the Commissioner Secretary during the visit.

During the meeting held at Trehgam, the Commissioner Secretary reviewed the status of infrastructure, service delivery and implementation of ongoing schemes as well as gap analysis done by the district administration in critical sectors such as



connectivity, health, education, livelihoods and digital access. He stressed upon the importance of convergence of different schemes and preparation of holistic village action plans based on gap analysis and baseline data.

Later, the Commissioner

Secretary visited Kunan-Poshpora and chaired a public interaction programme to take stock of public demands and grievances.

During the interaction, prominent citizens, village elders and local residents highlighted several developmental issues and demands, including construction

of a playground and Children's park, macadamisation of inner roads, protection of riverbanks along Kehmil Nallah, sanitation, drinking and irrigation water availability, upgradation of school and health centre etc.

The Commissioner Secretary assured the residents that all

their genuine issues would be addressed in a time-bound manner through the concerned departments. He also directed the officers to intensify awareness and outreach campaigns regarding different welfare schemes to ensure 100 percent saturation in these villages.

On the occasion, the Commissioner Secretary handed over PMMVY kits to newborns through their mothers and distributed scooters among the specially-abled beneficiaries to empower them. The initiative aims to strengthen maternal and child welfare while promoting

mobility and self-reliance among persons with disabilities. Programme Officer ICDS Kupwara, Assistant Commissioner Development, Chief Planning Officer, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat and other concerned officers were also present during the visit.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Zojila tunnel

to accelerate construction.

Following the breakthrough, focus will shift to internal works, including concrete lining, installation of ventilation systems and other safety infrastructure.

The tunnel will also feature a dedicated walkway for maintenance and emergency operations. Once completed, it is expected to significantly improve connectivity, mobility and economic activity in the region throughout the year.

The project, awarded by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL), has been under construction since October 2020. It is being executed using the New Austrian Tunneling Method (NATM), considered a key engineering technique for complex mountain terrains.

Officials said the tunnel will also enhance economic activity and tourism while addressing long-standing connectivity issues caused by snowfall and avalanches at the Zojila Pass, which remains shut for months every year.

MEIL said more than 1,200 personnel, including nearly 80 per cent local workforce, have been involved in the project. Despite facing five avalanche incidents over the past five years-including a major one in January 2023 when 172 workers were rescued by the Army-the project has recorded 10 million safe man-hours. (KNO)

LG visits Mubarak Mandi

of Darbar Hall, Conservation of Raja Ram Singh Palace, Conservation of Raja Amar Singh Palace, Conservation of Dogra Art Museum and other important works expected to be completed in the coming months.

LG, CM condole

family in this difficult hour. I pray to the Almighty to grant strength to the bereaved family members to bear this loss. May the departed soul rest in eternal peace."

CM Omar Abdullah conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family in this moment of deep sorrow. He prayed for strength and courage to the family members to bear this irreparable loss and for peace and comfort to

them during this difficult time.

The Chief Minister prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and expressed solidarity with the bereaved family, sharing in their grief and sorrow.

INDIA bloc meet

the ruling National Conference decided to hold protests in New Delhi on the opening day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

The Monsoon Session of Parliament is generally convened in the third week of July and runs until mid or late August.

In the meeting, Omar Abdullah is understood to have told that Congress is a glue that holds INDIA bloc together.

"Let us look ahead to 2029 and let us acknowledge that Congress is the glue that holds India together," Omar is understood to have said.

The INDIA bloc meeting at Constitution Club in New Delhi, was also attended by PDP president Mehbooba Mufti.

In the meeting, the opposition parties deliberated on key national and political issues and discussed a coordinated strategy against the BJP-led Centre. (KNO)

'Centre, J&K govt

The meeting focused on teacher training, institutional development, skilling and other measures aimed at strengthening the education ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Held a productive discussion with Sakina Itoo, Minister for Education, Health & Medical Education and Social Welfare, Government of Jammu & Kashmir," Pradhan said on X.

"Reviewed issues related to Teacher Education Institutions and the progress of school and higher education initiatives in Jammu & Kashmir. Discussed teacher training, institutional development, skilling and other measures to further strengthen the education ecosystem," he added.

The Union minister said they discussed efforts to enhance employability and to create greater opportunities for students and youths.

He said it was encouraging to see positive trends in enrolment and educational outcomes in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Encouraging to note the positive trends in

enrolment and educational outcomes. Through continued collaboration between the Central Government and the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, we remain committed to expanding access to quality education, enhancing employability and creating greater opportunities for the students and youth of Jammu & Kashmir," he said.

Chief Secy reviews

have been completed for the successful conduct of the House Listing and Housing Census (HLO) exercise across Jammu and Kashmir.

Sharma also presented a detailed review of field data collection activities, self-enumeration progress, formation of House Listing Blocks (HLBs), and arrangements for enumeration of migratory populations during the meeting.

He informed that a total of 23,887 House Listing Blocks (HLBs) have been created across 295 Census Charges in Jammu and Kashmir. Field operations have already commenced in 14,279 HLBs, with the enumeration process progressing steadily across districts, Sharma added.

The Chief Secretary also took note of the significant achievement of Jammu and Kashmir in the Self-Enumeration component of the Census. It was revealed that the UT has secured the first position among all Union Territories and eighth position among States and Union Territories where self-enumeration has been completed so far.

It was given out that as on June 1, 2026, a total of 6.67 lakh households had successfully completed self-enumeration through the digital platform.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed the special arrangements put in place for enumeration of migratory and transhumant populations. The meeting was informed that a comprehensive mechanism has been devised in coordination with the Forest, Tribal Affairs, Sheep Husbandry, Animal Husbandry, School Education Departments and district administrations to ensure 100 percent coverage of migratory communities during the HLO phase.

Detailed information regarding migratory routes, tribal hostels, mobile schools, sheep husbandry camps and other congregation points has been shared with all concerned

districts.

Moreover it was highlighted that the district administrations were advised to adopt flexible strategies, including fixing special enumeration dates and creating additional House Listing Blocks wherever required, to ensure that no eligible household or population group is left out of the census exercise.

Chief Secretary directed officers to maintain close supervision over the remaining preparatory activities and ensure strict adherence to census guidelines and timelines. He underscored the legal provisions available under the Census Act, 1948, and urged all departments and local authorities to extend full assistance to census personnel in discharge of their duties.

He reiterated that the success of the Census exercise hinges upon the coordinated efforts of all departments, field functionaries and district administrations. He urged all stakeholders to discharge their responsibilities with utmost diligence, efficiency and accountability to ensure accurate and timely completion of the exercise.

Pilgrim safety

said that the meeting also reviewed the arrangements being put in place for the upcoming Muharram observances across the Kashmir Valley. IGP Kashmir emphasized the need for adequate security, effective traffic management, and seamless coordination with the civil administration and other stakeholder agencies to facilitate the peaceful and smooth conduct of Muharram processions. Officers were directed to remain vigilant, maintain close liaison with organizers, and make all necessary arrangements to ensure public safety and convenience.

TOP OFFICERS ATTEND MEETING

The meeting was attended by all Range DIGs of Kashmir Zone, SSP PCR Kashmir, SsSP of Anantnag, Srinagar, Ganderbal, Kulgam, Pulwama, Baramulla, Kupwara, Shopian, Bandipora, Budgam, Sopore, Handwara, and Awantipora, SO to IGP Kashmir, SP Cargo, and other senior officers.

Officers presented detailed briefings outlining security arrangements, logistical requirements, and district-wise preparedness plans for the smooth conduct of the Amarnath Yatra

2026.

"Discussions focused on measures adopted to ensure the safety of pilgrims and the effective management of the pilgrimage routes," said an officer.

Reviewing the overall security framework, IGP Kashmir stressed the importance of strict adherence to SOPs and effective coordination among all agencies.

IGP Birdi directed officers to remain prepared for any contingency, including operational challenges, natural disasters, and other unforeseen situations, through a well-synchronized response mechanism.

He directed officers to conduct mock drills to test existing SOPs and improve operational efficiency wherever required.

IGP Birdi, called upon officers to maintain the highest standards of professionalism, vigilance, and coordination throughout the Amarnath Yatra and Muharram period to ensure the peaceful and smooth conduct of these events. (KNO)

Kashmir records

guest houses, houseboats and transport operators witnessed increased business during the first week of June. Advance bookings for the coming weeks also remain strong, they said.

Notably, Kashmir has been witnessing relatively cool and pleasant weather conditions in recent weeks, with daytime temperatures remaining significantly lower than those recorded in many parts of north, west and central India.

While several states, including Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana and parts of Uttar Pradesh, have been experiencing heatwave conditions and soaring temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius, the Valley has continued to offer a respite from the intense summer heat.

Tourism stakeholders said the favourable weather has emerged as a major attraction for visitors seeking relief from the scorching conditions elsewhere in the country.

They said many tourists were opting for longer stays in Kashmir, particularly in destinations such as Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Pahalgam, Gurez and Doodhpathri, where temperatures remained comfortable. (KNO)

'Drama of gathbandhan; won't make any difference': BJP's dig at INDIA bloc's meeting

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 8: The BJP on Monday took a swipe at the opposition INDIA bloc over its meeting, saying those who have been turned "completely inactive" by the people are trying to become active somehow but it will not make any difference.

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra also accused the INDIA bloc leaders of "hypocrisy" and said those who were attacking and criticising each other till recently are now doing "drama of gathbandhan's meeting".

"People are watching everything. No matter how many meetings 'INDI gathbandhan (alliance)' holds, they will not yield any result. Such meetings will have no impact," the BJP MP told reporters at the party headquarters here.

"None of these political parties have any presence on the ground... People have completely rendered them inactive, yet they are somehow trying to become active," Patra added.

Leaders of the opposition INDIA bloc met here at the Constitution Club on Monday and stressed the need for unity among its constituents to safeguard "democratic values".

The meeting deliberated on a host of issues and decided to write to the Chief Justice of India on the SIR exercise and "vote loot" besides demanding immediate resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET-CBSE row.

Addressing a press conference after the meeting, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said the opposition leaders also demanded that the Union government convene an all-party meeting to discuss the



"precarious economic situation" in the country, unemployment, price rise, farmers' issues and people-centric matters.

Taking a dig at the opposition parties, Patra said, "Earlier, such meetings (of INDIA bloc) used to be held in a stadium. They were seen holding each other's hands at a stadium in Bangalore. Their meeting has now shifted to a room at the Constitution Club."

"During elections, (former West Bengal chief minister) Mamata Banerjee said the Congress is losing its credibility. Rahul Gandhi said that the BJP has entered West Bengal due to the bad activities of Banerjee's party.

"And today, they were sitting together. Sonia Gandhi and Mamata Banerjee were hugging each other as if they were sisters separated at the Kumbh Mela," the BJP leader said.

Seeking to underscore differences among the INDIA bloc constituents, Patra also cited the DMK's request for a separate seating arrangement in the Lok Sabha and its leader Udhayanidhi Stalin's sharp criticism of the Congress over the latter extending its

support to the TVK in government formation in Tamil Nadu.

"They share the same drawing room where the meeting is held, but their electoral battlegrounds are distinct. Once they step out of that drawing room, they head to their own separate political arena, where they curse each other," he said.

Patra claimed that the INDIA bloc meeting neither had any "agenda nor any strategy" except dislodging the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre.

"The INDI alliance meeting had just one agenda of removing (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi," the BJP leader charged and asked, "Tell me what is important? To save someone or to remove? To take the country forward or belittle someone?"

Patra also slammed Kharge over his remarks on the SIR, calling it the "height of hypocrisy" by the Congress president.

"The SIR was conducted in Tamil Nadu and Kerala also. But you are not cursing it there. You swiftly forged an alliance with another party (TVK), leaving the DMK to form government in Tamil Nadu. And in Kerala, you (Congress) formed government in Kerala," he added. In a

post on X, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said there is a complete implosion in the INDIA bloc, with disagreements involving the Congress and the DMK, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and the Left parties.

He added that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has also questioned the Congress' intentions behind forging alliances with regional parties.

"There is no INDI alliance. It is just a figment of one's imagination. Cosmetic meetings take place, but real conviction on the ground is never seen," the BJP leader said.

Claiming that the opposition alliance lacks a common purpose, Poonawalla said it has "no mission, no vision, only division".

"It was always about confusion, ambition and division. Those divisions are now playing out on a daily basis. Even when these parties came together, they did so not out of conviction but for convenience," he said.

In a video statement, he claimed that regional parties do not have faith in the Congress as it "actually uses and throws them".

"The DMK has said the Congress is a backstabber and that it does not want to sit with the party. The JMM has a fight with the Congress over the second Rajya Sabha seat in Jharkhand, saying the Congress did not even ask it.

"The RJD, Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena and other parties feel that the Congress uses them and then throws them," he said.

"The INDI alliance is only in papers, headlines and cosmetic actions, and never in reality," he added. The BJP spokesperson also pointed to electoral contests among the INDIA bloc allies in states such as West Bengal, Kerala, Punjab, Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan, questioning its unity.

TMC rebellion spreads from assembly to Parliament

Breakaway camp claims support of 20 MPs

PTI

New Delhi/Kolkata, Jun 8: After a split between its MLAs, the Trinamool Congress appeared headed for an implosion in Parliament, with a group of MPs claiming majority support deciding to ditch Mamata Banerjee and back the BJP-led NDA.

On a day when TMC chief Mamata Banerjee and party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee were attending the INDIA bloc meeting in Delhi, Lok Sabha MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, who is at the forefront of the rebel faction, said they had decided to write to Speaker Om Birla declaring support for the NDA.

The crisis engulfing the TMC deepened on Monday with Ghosh Dastidar claiming that 20 MPs of the party have decided to write to the speaker.

Speaking to PTI over phone, Ghosh Dastidar said, "Nearly twenty TMC MPs, including me, have decided to write to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and formally support the NDA."

Sources said the dissident MPs intend to argue before the speaker that Ghosh Dastidar continues to be the chief whip of the party in the Lok Sabha.

"We have accepted the people's verdict and believe that our future political course should be aligned with the NDA," Ghosh Dastidar said.

A TMC leader, however, said the party had communicated its decision to remove her as chief



whip and appoint Kalyan Banerjee to the Lok Sabha Secretariat through an official letter dated May 20, signed by TMC Parliamentary Party Chairperson Mamata Banerjee.

A copy of the letter shared by party sources showed a stamp of receipt from the speaker's office dated May 29.

According to sources, the rebel MPs have chosen not to immediately resign from the TMC or join the BJP. Instead, they intend to function as a separate bloc supporting the NDA, a strategy designed as a shield against the anti-defection law.

The arithmetic is politically significant.

The TMC currently has 28 Lok Sabha MPs, with one vacancy following the death of Basirhat MP Haji Nurul Islam. The support of 20 MPs would comfortably cross the two-thirds threshold needed to thwart the invocation of the anti-defection law.

The TMC leader, however, reiterated that even securing that number would not automatically enable the rebel faction to function as a separate

parliamentary group. "As per the law, even if two-thirds of MPs wish to leave a party, the only choice they have is to merge with another political party. There is no provision for a separate group," the leader said.

A group of dissident MPs, meanwhile, held a meeting at BJP leader Bhupender Yadav's residence in Delhi, a source said.

A photograph purportedly from the meeting circulating online showed Rajya Sabha MP Sukhendu Shekhar Ray, along with MPs Abu Taher, Asit Mal, Arup Chakraborty, Kalipada Soren, Jagadish Basunia, Prasun Banerjee, Sharmila Sarkar, and Satabdi Roy.

Party sources also said around 20 MPs attended an informal gathering at an undisclosed location in the national capital late Sunday night.

According to sources familiar with the meeting, the MPs discussed possible courses of action and expressed their displeasure over the existing party's parliamentary leadership structure.

TMC MP Sougata Roy dismissed suggestions of an exodus.

Centre's welfare schemes connected millions to bank: Shah



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 8: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said central schemes such as PM Awas and Jan-Dhan have connected crores of citizens to banking facilities and financial security.

In a message on X on the completion of the second year of the third term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government, Shah said 'Garib Kalyan' is the topmost priority of the Modi government.

"In #12YearsOfGaribKalyan, the government has connected crores of citizens to banking facilities, financial security, and self-employment opportunities through welfare schemes like the Ann Yojana, PM Awas, Jan-Dhan, Mudra Loan, and PM Swanidhi.

"By integrating the country's poor to the economic mainstream through basic infrastructure, social security, and a better standard of living, a strong foundation for a 'Viksit Bharat' is being built," he said.

Tea break, unattended fryer, delayed alert: Probe reveals what went wrong in Delhi hotel inferno

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 8: A tea break, an unattended oil fryer left burning, and a cook who quietly walked away without alerting anyone as flames began to spread -- these lapses have now emerged as critical links in a chain of failures leading to the Malviya Nagar hotel fire that claimed 22 lives.

Investigations have revealed that a nearly 30-minute delay before the first emergency call was made allowed the fire to intensify unchecked, turning what began as a routine kitchen oversight into a devastating tragedy that may have been prevented with timely action.

According to the police, the fire at Flourish Stays B&B in Malviya Nagar's Hauz Rani area on June 3 began after an oil fryer was inadvertently left switched on while the cook prepared tea for himself.

As the oil in the fryer reached its auto-ignition temperature, it ignited suddenly, setting the ceiling ablaze and triggering a rapidly-spreading fire that quickly engulfed the building. The blaze spread faster, fuelled further by highly inflammable materials such as cartons stored within the premises.

While the probe deepened,



hotel owner Lavkesh Bajaj's close associate and accountant Jay Mishra (34) surrendered before a Delhi court on Monday and was sent to two days' police custody. Investigators believe Mishra played a key role in the day-to-day management of the establishment and are examining his involvement in the hotel's operations, finances, licensing and compliance with safety regulations.

Police are also preparing to seek technical assistance from

IIT-Delhi to scientifically examine how the blaze spread so rapidly through the building.

Officials said the institute may be asked to conduct a structural and fire-propagation study, including possible 3D mapping of the gutted premises, to help reconstruct the sequence of events and identify factors that trapped occupants inside.

According to investigators, three staff members were present in the building when the fire started on June 4 -- cook Keshav

Negi, a helper sleeping on the top floor, and manager Rupesh alias Rakesh.

During questioning, Negi allegedly told police that he switched on a fryer containing oil and then prepared tea for himself. While drinking tea, he forgot that the fryer was still running. After it overheated, it burst into flames that spread to the ceiling before engulfing nearby combustible material.

Police said Negi initially attempted to extinguish the flames but fled when the fire grew beyond his control.

Investigators allege that he failed to warn guests, inform neighbours or call emergency services despite having sufficient time to do so.

"The gap between the first signs of fire and the first call to police was around half an hour. This period is being closely examined because timely evacuation and alerting authorities could have reduced the scale of the tragedy," a source said.

The helper sleeping on the top floor escaped by jumping from the terrace, while manager Rupesh allegedly fled from the reception area on the ground floor. Police are still searching for him. Investigators believe the failure of staff members to immediately raise

an alarm may have contributed to the high death toll. A Nigerian national undergoing treatment succumbed to injuries on Saturday, taking the number of deaths to 22.

The deceased was identified as Okale, who had suffered severe burn injuries and was undergoing treatment at Safdarjung Hospital.

Police have confirmed that Bajaj reached the site after the fire had broken out. They also clarified that contrary to some claims, the hotel did not have an electronic gate system.

The investigation has been complicated by the destruction of CCTV cameras and footage, both inside and outside the building, due to the fire. Police said Bajaj owns three hotels in the Hauz Rani area, one of which is operated with a business partner.

Mishra, who had been absconding since the incident, surrendered before Judicial Magistrate Bhanu Pratap Singh and was formally arrested by Delhi Police. According to police, Mishra had earlier been booked in 2024 in connection with the absence of safety and security arrangements at the hotel under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Investigators have also found that several key hotel-related documents were in his name

BRICS meeting in Indore to focus on food security, farmer welfare: Chouhan

PTI

Bhopal, Jun 8: A five-day meeting of the BRICS grouping will commence in Indore on Tuesday to discuss food security, smart farming, global agricultural trade and farmer welfare, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Monday.

The discussions under India's presidency will include a three-day agriculture working group meeting from June 9 and a two-day BRICS ministerial meeting from June 12, he said. BRICS is an

intergovernmental organisation comprising eleven major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia.

Highlighting the significance of the meeting, Chouhan said BRICS is a very strong voice of the developing countries in the world.

"Around half of the world's population dwells in BRICS countries. It has 42 per cent of the global agricultural land and accounts for more than 42 per cent of the



produce. Of the 58 crore farmers across

the world, 70 per cent small cultivators live in BRICS nations," he said.

The Union minister said the five-day gathering will deliberate on food security, farmer welfare, nutrition, climate-resilient smart agriculture, facilitation of international agricultural trade, supply chains, "digital agriculture", research, knowledge exchange, artificial intelligence, and robotics.

He said a joint declaration will be issued after consensus among the BRICS agriculture ministers. Chouhan recalled that India

has presided over BRICS meetings in 2012, 2016 and 2021. Last month, Chouhan had told reporters in Indore that the BRICS meeting, to be held under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, would prove to be a historic opportunity for the global agriculture sector. "It will provide a new direction to the world," he had said.

Coincidentally, the meeting is being held in Madhya Pradesh's financial capital at a time when the state government has declared 2026 as the Agriculture Welfare Year.

Iran, Israel say they have halted strikes on each other for now

REUTERS

Dubai/Jerusalem, Jun 08: Iran and Israel said on Monday they had halted attacks on each other following an appeal from US President Donald Trump that they immediately "stop shooting," though Tehran said it would resume strikes if Israel continued to hit Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The wave of attacks over the past 24 hours marked the most direct confrontation between Iran and Israel since an April ceasefire, threatening to wreck Washington's efforts to reach an agreement with Tehran to end their more than three-month war.

Oil prices — which had risen by as much as 5 percent after the flurry of attacks — later pared gains when Iran's military said its first wave of strikes on Israel was over. The dollar retreated from its highest level in nearly two months.

A source briefed on the matter told Reuters that Israel had also decided to halt its attacks on Iran.

Israel struck Iranian targets after Tehran fired missiles toward Israeli territory late on Sunday. Tehran said its strikes were retaliation for Israeli attacks on strongholds of Iran-backed Hezbollah on the outskirts of Beirut.

Israel hit a petrochemical plant in southwestern Iran that it said was used to produce ballistic missiles. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said it retaliated with a strike aimed at a similar Israeli plant in the city of Haifa.

"Painful response" Iran's military headquarters said it had "delivered a painful response" against Israel for its attacks on Lebanon, including Sunday's strikes on the outskirts of Beirut.

"Accordingly, the operations



Israeli settlers stand next to part of a missile protruding from the ground, following strikes from Iran, in the central Israeli-occupied West Bank on June 8. © Reuters

of the armed forces are hereby declared halted; however, it is emphasized that if the aggressions and acts of mischief continue — including in southern Lebanon — much more severe and crushing actions than before will follow."

The exchange has complicated Trump's push to end the war, launched by the US and Israel on February 28, and underscores how easily the conflict could widen into a broader regional confrontation. A ceasefire announced on April 8 had paused all-out warfare but flare-ups in the Gulf have continued.

In one of several posts on social media, Trump said Israel and Iran both wanted "an immediate CEASEFIRE! Final negotiations on 'Peace' are proceeding, subject to ignorance or stupidity getting in its way." He added that a US blockade of Iranian ports would remain in place till a final deal was

reached. An Israeli official said Trump had spoken with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday.

Earlier, an Israeli military official said Israel was prepared to continue operations for "as long as it takes," and confirmed strikes on newly rebuilt Iranian air defense systems in addition to the petrochemical target.

Iranian officials struck a similarly defiant tone. A military source quoted by the semi-official Tasnim news agency said Tehran was ready for a prolonged conflict and could renew strikes against US interests in the region.

"Extreme suspicion" Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said Tehran was exchanging messages with Washington in an atmosphere of "extreme suspicion." Israel's actions in Lebanon, whether carried out with US knowledge and consent

or not, were aimed at sabotaging diplomacy, he added.

In Tehran, Iranian media reported explosions on Monday, with air defenses shooting down a drone over the capital. There were no immediate reports of casualties or major damage.

Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis pledged in a statement to stop Israel's maritime navigation in the Red Sea, and said they had also fired missiles at Israel.

The Houthis have so far largely stayed out of the regional war. They control territory at the mouth of the Red Sea, increasingly important as an alternative route for millions of barrels per day of Middle East oil otherwise blocked by Iran's grip on the Strait of Hormuz.

The Israeli military official said Iran had fired "close to 30 ballistic missiles" at Israel since Sunday evening, and the Houthis a further two missiles.

Israel said it struck targets at the Mahshahr petrochemical complex that were used to produce and export raw materials for Iran's missile program. A provincial official told Iranian media parts of the plant were damaged.

Fifteen people were injured across Iran in the latest Israeli attacks — 14 of them in Mahshahr County — but no deaths have been reported, Iran's National Emergency Organization said.

The Israeli ambulance service said no casualties are reported from the missile launches toward Israel.

Lebanese-Israeli talks to resume

Israel has never halted its Lebanon campaign, which has killed thousands of people, saying it should be treated separately from any Iran ceasefire. Hezbollah has also continued its attacks.

Tehran has long said any peace deal with the US would depend on an end to fighting in Lebanon, which Israel invaded in March in pursuit of Hezbollah fighters who fired across the border in solidarity with Tehran.

The US ambassador to Lebanon, Michel Issa, said on Monday that Lebanese-Israeli negotiations were scheduled to resume in Washington.

Tehran has continued to block most shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, which carried a fifth of the world's crude oil and liquefied natural gas before the war. Washington has imposed its own blockade of Iranian ports.

Trump has said any peace deal must prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. Iran's demands include the lifting of international sanctions, the release of billions of dollars in frozen assets and recognition of its sway over the strait.

Pope Leo warns Spain's parliament world is in 'profound' crisis



REUTERS

Madrid, Jun 08: Pope Leo told Spain's parliament that escalating conflict, deepening polarization and widespread disregard for human rights had pushed the world into a profound crisis, in one of his most expansive political addresses yet on Monday.

Leo, who has adopted a more forceful tone recently against the direction of global leadership, also firmly repeated his opposition to increased European military spending, urging politicians instead to end the wars ravaging the globe and help migrants.

"The world is undergoing a profound spiritual and cultural crisis, which is manifested in multiple forms of violence, polarization, and mutual distrust," the pope said in the address, which came hours after Israel and Iran renewed their attacks on one another in the most serious test of a two-month

ceasefire.

"Weapons can impose a temporary silence; but they can never build an authentic and lasting peace," he said.

Migration challenging world's 'ethical foundation'

Leo's speech, which was delivered with a seven-minute standing ovation by lawmakers, was a rare papal address to a national legislature and the first by a pope to Spain's parliament.

It is part of a week-long visit to the country in which the pontiff has met with migrants and the homeless, and called on national leaders to stop dividing their electorates.

The pope, whose Spain tour will culminate with the pontiff meeting migrants in the Canary Islands who braved dangerous Atlantic waters to enter Europe, said a lack of help for the world's migrants was challenging "the ethical foundation of the international order."

WHO chief visits Ebola-hit Uganda



AFP

Geneva, Jun 08: The World Health Organization's director-general on Monday visited Uganda, where a deadly Ebola outbreak has killed two people out of 19 infections after spreading from the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. "I am in Uganda,

where the government has mounted a prompt and capable response to the outbreak of Ebola," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote on X.

"Screening at the borders helped detect cases arriving from neighboring DRC, and the country's surveillance, testing and case management systems are doing steady work."

Football crisis: Sports Minister asks AIFF, ISL clubs to form task force for 'structured' league

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 8: Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya asked the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and ISL clubs to create a task force that would thrash out a "structured plan" for at least the next two seasons of the crisis-ridden

league in a meeting here on Monday. The deliberation session that lasted a couple of hours in the afternoon was "cordial", according to well-placed sources and the minister urged the clubs and the AIFF to work out an "amicable business model" for the 14-club Indian Super

League (ISL). "He has asked the AIFF and the ISL clubs to make this task force that would plan the league for the next two years and also commercial plan for it. He has asked them to do this as soon as possible and come back to him with an amicable business model," a

well-placed source told PTI. It was Mandaviya's intervention that made the 2025-26 season a reality, albeit truncated, after the clubs and the AIFF failed to resolve the financial crisis that was triggered by Reliance Group-backed FSDL's exit as commercial partner in December last year.

India-England T20I matches to start one hour early

PTI

London, Jun 8: The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has advanced the start time of all five T20 International matches against India by an hour, with the matches now scheduled to begin at 10:00pm IST to maximise television viewership in the subcontinent, according to a media report.

The five T20Is between the two former World Cup winners were earlier slated for 11:00pm IST (6:30pm local time) start, but they have been moved an hour early after discussions with the broadcasters, reported ESPNCricinfo.

World Yogasana Championships 2026

Hosts India signs off with century of gold medals



PTI

Ahmedabad, Jun 8: India ended their campaign at the inaugural World Yogasana Championships with 114 medals, including 102 gold, to underline their domination here on Monday.

Japan were a distant second with three gold, three silver and five bronze with Argentina taking the third spot thanks to their lone athlete Nabila Barraza's exploit of winning two gold and three silver.

Nepal were the second most successful contingent in terms of number of medals won as they clinched a total of 52 medals (1 gold, 36 silver, 15 bronze) to finish fifth on the medal standings.

Uzbekistan finished with 25 medals, with one gold, 13 silver and 11 bronze.

The Championships concluded on Monday.

In all, 522 athletes from 79 countries participated in the Championships with 31 of them

winning at least one medal each. Ten of those managed to win at least one gold medal.

Hosts India had fielded a 122-member contingent, with athletes competing across six age categories -- Sub-Junior Men and Women (10-14 years), Junior Men and Women (14-18 years), Senior (18-28 years), Senior A (28-35 years), Senior B (35-45 years) and Senior C (45-55 years).

In a video message, World Yogasana President Swami Ramdev described the Championship as the beginning of a global movement.

"World Yogasana Championship is not the destination; it is the beginning of a global movement. Yoga is not merely a sport -- it is a way of life, a path to health, harmony, peace and human unity. Every athlete here is not just a champion, but an ambassador of yoga to the world. "Today we celebrate medals and champions, but tomorrow we must create a world connected through yoga. I firmly believe that the journey which began here will one day take Yogasana to the Olympic stage and inspire generations across the globe," he said.

The inaugural championships marks a historic milestone in the evolution of Yogasana, transforming an ancient Indian practice into a globally competitive sporting discipline while strengthening its pathway towards Olympic recognition.

Movies Schedule

TUESDAY, 9TH JUNE

 PEDDI (HINDI) (U/A16+) 02:15 PM	 HAI JAWANI TOH ISHQ HONA HAI (HINDI ATMOS) (U/A16+) 11:00 AM 01:50 PM 04:40 PM 07:30 PM
 OBSESSION (ENGLISH) (A) 10:45 AM 01:15 PM 03:45 PM 06:30 PM	 BANDAR (HINDI) (A) 06:00 PM
 HE-MAN THE MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE (ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES) (U/A16+) 11:20 AM	 HAI JAWANI TOH ISHQ HONA HAI


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