

Zojila Tunnel breakthrough 'golden chapter' in India's infrastructure history: Nitin Gadkari

Will serve as lifeline for Ladakh, J&K by ensuring all-weather connectivity

Highway development worth ₹1.35 lakh crore underway in J&K

Engineers, workers, agencies worked in tough conditions

Raja Syed Rather

Ganderbal, Jun 09: Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday termed the Zojila Tunnel breakthrough a "golden chapter" in India's infrastructure history, saying it will serve as a lifeline for Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir by ensuring all-weather connectivity.

Addressing a press conference after the ceremony, Gadkari, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said the 14-km tunnel is among the country's most significant infrastructure projects, built to global safety standards despite challenging terrain and harsh weather.

He praised engineers, workers and agencies involved in the project, noting construction was carried out at an altitude of around 3,000 metres in sub-zero temperatures, with nearly 80% of the workforce comprising local labour.

Gadkari said the project, prioritised after 2014, was executed successfully after multiple failed tender attempts earlier, and at a significantly lower cost than originally estimated.

The Union Minister also announced a series of new



infrastructure projects for Ladakh, including the Rs 1,000-crore Leh South Bypass (48 km) and Rs 200-crore Leh North Bypass (7.6 km) to ease congestion and improve connectivity. He said work on the 2.6-km Fatu La twin-tube tunnel,

estimated at Rs 1,200 crore, will begin within three months, while the Rs 3,500-crore Tala Pass Tunnel project is in the final DPR stage, with contracts likely before March next year.

In addition, Gadkari announced the widening and

upgradation of the Srinagar-Gumri road to further strengthen connectivity and complement the Zojila Tunnel.

He reiterated the Centre's commitment to expanding infrastructure in the Himalayan region and | More on P6

Zojila Tunnel will usher new era of connectivity in J&K, Ladakh: LG Sinha

Expresses gratitude to PM Modi, Union Min Gadkari for making this vision a reality

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Minimarg, Jun 09: Terming the breakthrough of the strategically crucial Zojila Tunnel a "historic milestone," Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday said that it would ensure all-weather connectivity between Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, and



boost economic growth, tourism and national security in the border region. Addressing | More on P6

Meet the Iranian face of Zojila breakthrough

Engineer Yusuf says India is his second home

Raja Syed Rather

Sonamarg, Jun 09: Beneath the snow-bound mountains of Zojila, an engineer from Iran found himself celebrating a breakthrough that felt as personal as it was historic.

As India's longest road tunnel inches closer to completion, Yusuf, an Iranian engineer who has played a key role in constructing the | More on P6

Zojila Tunnel will improve lives of people: CM Omar

'Another long-pending demand of Kargil is regular air connectivity'

Raja Syed Rather

Minimarg, Jun 09: Asserting that Zojila Tunnel project will bring improvements in people's lives, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said that it would ease access to



education, healthcare and markets, and significantly boost tourism and trade.

Addressing the gathering at the ceremony, CM Omar, according to | More on P6

'57-km Sgr-Sonamarg road to be four-laned'

Raja Syed Rather

Ganderbal, Jun 09: Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday announced a Rs 1,500-crore project to upgrade the 57-km Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri stretch into a four-lane highway with paved shoulders.

Speaking to reporters after the Zojila Tunnel breakthrough, Gadkari, per news agency—Kashmir | More on P6

J&K mandates mother tongue, home language as instruction medium in schools



Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Jun 09: The government Tuesday said that mother tongue and home language shall be used as the primary medium of instruction in early years in schools of Jammu and Kashmir with gradual bridging to additional languages.

It also ordered the school administration to ensure that by the end of Grade II, every child reads age-appropriate text with fluency, demonstrates comprehension, and retells stories sequentially.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News

Observer (KNO), State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT-J&K) said this in a circular regarding the strengthening of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) at the Foundational Stage (Age 3-8 Years) in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 and NIPUN Bharat Mission.

SCERT said that the academic reviews and field observations have indicated the need for systematic strengthening of literacy and numeracy practices at the Foundational Stage (3-8 years).

"In order to ensure uniform and effective | More on P6

Kashmir parts witness hailstorms, heavy rainfall; heatwave in Jammu

MeT predicts widespread wet spell from June 11 to 14

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 09: Several parts of Kashmir witnessed hailstorms and heavy rainfall on Tuesday, bringing temporary relief from rising temperatures, while the Meteorological Department forecast a significant change in weather across Jammu and Kashmir from June 11, with thunderstorms, gusty winds and intense showers likely at many places.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Shopian witnessed an intense hailstorm this afternoon, while rain and hailstorms were reported from Banihal in Ramban district. Heavy rainfall was recorded in parts of Kulgam and Bijbehara in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

Reports of rainfall and hailstorms also emerged from several areas of North Kashmir, including Bandipora and Baramulla districts, where residents experienced a sudden change in weather conditions after a largely warm day.

The weather activity came even as severe heatwave conditions continued to affect parts of Jammu division, particularly Udhampur district, which remained among the worst-hit areas in the Union Territory.

According to the India | More on P6

J&K sees 42% precipitation deficit during January-May

May records 36% shortfall; weather forecaster warns reduced snowfall, warming temperatures could affect long-term regional water security

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 09: Jammu and Kashmir recorded a 36 per cent rainfall deficit in May, pushing the overall precipitation shortfall for the January-May period to 42 per cent and raising concerns over water availability, agriculture and hydropower generation in the coming months, according to data released by Kashmir Weather, an independent weather forecaster.

According to details obtained by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Union Territory received 49.4 mm of rainfall in May against the normal 77.5 mm, continuing a prolonged dry spell that has persisted since November 2025.



Monthly precipitation departures during 2026 stood at minus 23 per cent in January, minus 89 per cent in February, minus 34 per cent in March, minus 13 per cent in April and minus 36 per cent in May, resulting in a cumulative deficit of 42 per cent during the first five months of

the year, according to the forecaster.

The data showed wide variations across districts, with several parts of Kashmir and Jammu divisions witnessing significant rainfall shortages.

In Kashmir, Shopian recorded the highest deficit at 83 per cent, receiving

only 13.5 mm rainfall against the normal 78.2 mm. Budgam and Kulgam recorded deficits of 69 per cent each, while Anantnag, Pulwama, Srinagar, Bandipora and Baramulla also remained below normal.

Ganderbal was among the few districts to record near-normal precipitation, receiving 92.1 mm rainfall against a normal of 91.3 mm, while Kupwara also ended the month close to normal levels.

In the Jammu division, Ramban recorded a 65 per cent deficit, followed by Kishtwar at 57 per cent, Kathua at 56 per cent, Jammu at 55 per cent and Reasi at 53 per cent. Rajouri, Doda, Samba and Udhampur | More on P6



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CS calls for saturation of beneficiary-oriented schemes across J&K

‘Targeted outreach, regular monitoring, public awareness would be key to achieving saturation’

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JUNE 09: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo chaired a high-level review meeting on Tuesday attended by the concerned Administrative Secretaries to assess the implementation and saturation of individual beneficiary-oriented schemes being executed by various departments across Jammu and Kashmir.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary, as per an official statement, stressed the need for ensuring complete saturation of all eligible beneficiaries under these welfare schemes by proactively reaching out to the people and generating mass awareness through different communication channels.

The Chief Secretary impressed upon all the concerned departments to bridge the gap between identified targets and beneficiaries already covered under different schemes. He directed them to make concerted efforts to ensure that the benefits of these schemes reach every intended beneficiary in a time-bound manner.

Emphasising the importance of grassroots outreach, Dulloo called for the formulation of concrete action plans to identify and enrol all eligible individuals and households under the schemes. He maintained that it is the responsibility of the administration to ensure that every



deserving beneficiary receives the benefits meant for them and that leaving eligible persons uncovered would amount to a disservice to the people.

He further directed the departments to undertake periodic reviews of their respective schemes and fix measurable targets at every administrative level so that the benefits are extended to all eligible beneficiaries in a systematic and efficient manner.

Earlier, Commissioner Secretary, Planning Development and Monitoring Department, R. Alice Vaz, informed the meeting that a total of 66 beneficiary-oriented schemes are currently being implemented in the Union Territory through 18 departments. She highlighted that these schemes are designed to provide direct benefits to the people and play a crucial role in improving their

socio-economic well-being.

Giving a detailed presentation, the Commissioner Secretary outlined the targeted beneficiary groups under each scheme and the nature of assistance being extended through cash transfers, food security, housing support, healthcare services, educational assistance and livelihood promotion initiatives.

The meeting was informed that among the 66 schemes under implementation, 21 are being executed by the Social Welfare Department, eight by the Health Department, seven each by the Agriculture Production Department, Rural Development Department and School Education Department, three by the Tribal Affairs Department, while the remaining schemes are being implemented by other departments.

Several flagship and high-impact

schemes were reviewed during the meeting, including the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), PM-KISAN and Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) of the Agriculture Department; National Livestock Mission of the Animal Husbandry Department; PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme of the Horticulture Department; One Nation One Ration Card initiative of the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department; PMAY-Gramin and Himayat of the Rural Development Department; PM Surya Ghar Yojana; PM Vishwakarma; besides various scholarship and pension schemes being implemented by the Social Welfare Department.

The meeting also reviewed schemes being implemented by the Health, School Education and Skill Development Departments aimed at enhancing health indicators, educational opportunities and strengthening skill development among the population of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Chief Secretary reiterated that the targeted outreach, regular monitoring and public awareness would be key to achieving saturation under these schemes and ensuring that the intended benefits reach every eligible citizen across the UT.

Div Com Kashmir reviews SMRDA Projects, stresses timely completion of all projects

Upgradation of General Bus Stand at Parimpora, upgradation of Transport Nagar at Parimpora, construction of community facilities reviewed



KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JUNE 09: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Tuesday chaired a high-level review meeting of the Srinagar Metropolitan Regional Development Authority (SMRDA) to assess the physical and financial progress of ongoing developmental projects.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by the Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Commissioner Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL), Vice Chairman Srinagar Development Authority (SDA), Additional Deputy Commissioners of Srinagar and Budgam, Chief Engineer R&B, and senior officers of SMRDA.

During the meeting,

SMRDA Officers presented comprehensive presentation outlining the status of various projects being executed through different implementing agencies. It was informed that a total Capex outlay of 2,702 lakh has been approved for the financial year 2025-26, against which 846 lakh has been released.

The meeting was informed that out of 15 ongoing projects, one project has been completed both physically and financially, while seven projects have achieved physical completion.

Additionally, six more projects are expected to be completed by the end of the financial year 2026-27.

On the occasion, The Div Com reviewed key

infrastructure projects, including the upgradation of the General Bus Stand at Parimpora, upgradation of Transport Nagar at Parimpora under the SASCI Project, construction of community facilities and community halls in various parts of Srinagar, and several developmental works in Ganderbal and Budgam districts.

Emphasizing the need for accelerated execution, Anshul Garg directed the concerned agencies to ensure timely completion of all projects and maintain quality standards. He also approved the release of funds for ongoing works to facilitate their smooth and expeditious implementation.

DC Budgam reviews traffic management, tourist facilities at Doodhpathri

KT NEWS DESK

BUDGAM, JUNE 09: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, Tuesday chaired a meeting to review traffic management arrangements and tourist facilities at Doodhpathri Budgam.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by the Additional Superintendent of Police Budgam, Chief Executive Officer Doodhpathri Development Authority, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Khansahib, Deputy Superintendent of Police (Traffic Rural) Budgam, Assistant Regional Transport Officer Budgam, and other concerned officers.

During the meeting, a review of the existing traffic management system and visitor facilitation measures was undertaken. Various issues related to smooth vehicular movement, tourist convenience, and overall management of the destination were discussed in detail.

The DC emphasised the importance of coordinated efforts among all stakeholder departments to ensure efficient traffic regulation and a safe, orderly, and hassle-free experience for tourists.

SWD Srinagar organizes awareness, outreach programme at Tribal Research Institute Khimber

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, JUNE 09: Social Welfare Department (SWD) through SANKALP-hub for empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti Srinagar in collaboration with J&K Tribal Research Institute Srinagar, Tuesday organized an Awareness and Outreach Programme at Tribal Research Institute (TRI) Khimber aimed at enhancing awareness about various welfare schemes, educational opportunities, and socio-economic development initiatives for tribal communities.

The Programme, as per an official statement, witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, youth, community members, and members of the general public from the tribal belt.

DC Ganderbal reviews SANJY-2026 preparedness

Directs timely completion of all works for smooth, safe Yatra



KT NEWS DESK

GANDERBAL, JUNE 09: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore Tuesday chaired a comprehensive review meeting here to assess the preparedness and progress of developmental and logistical arrangements being undertaken for the smooth conduct of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY)-2026 along the Baltal axis.

During the review, the DC, as per an official statement, took a department-wise assessment of works included in the Action Plan-2026 and directed all executing agencies to ensure completion of pending works by June 20th, well ahead of the commencement of the annual pilgrimage.

Superintending Engineer Public Works (Roads and Buildings) Department informed the meeting that works relating to development of parking facilities, improvement of footpaths and pony tracks and installation of barricades for crowd management at Baltal are progressing satisfactorily.

Superintending Engineer KPDCL apprised the meeting that the augmentation of the electricity distribution network, installation of street lighting and other works are being carried out on priority to ensure uninterrupted power supply at Baltal, Domail,

Transit Camp and other Yatra locations.

Similarly Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Department informed the meeting that significant progress on water supply infrastructure, including augmentation of pipe networks and strengthening of facilities to cater to pilgrims, service providers and security personnel along the Yatra route has been achieved, and rest of the works shall be completed within set timelines.

Executive Engineer Irrigation and Flood Control department was directed to complete all assigned works within the stipulated time. The Health Department informed that adequate medical arrangements have been put in place, including deployment of ambulances, emergency response teams, manpower and medical equipment at designated health facilities and base camps.

The Labour Department and Animal Husbandry Department informed the meeting that registration of labourers and service providers associated with the Yatra is being carried out on a priority basis. DC directed the Assistant Commissioner Labour to expedite the registration process.

In order to ensure optimal utilisation of parking spaces, and plying of smooth traffic along the yatra route,

concerned officers were directed to compile and submit effective parking and transport plan.

The meeting also reviewed arrangements related to telecommunications, sanitation, ration supply, fire safety measures and conveyance for yatries besides SRTC bus service. Departments concerned were directed to maintain close coordination and address all bottlenecks on priority.

The DC emphasized that all departments must work in mission mode to ensure seamless facilities for pilgrims. He instructed officers to expedite pending verifications, finalize manpower deployment plans and submit regular progress reports for effective monitoring. Reiterating the administration's commitment to a safe, smooth and hassle-free Yatra, the DC directed all departments to adhere strictly to timelines and ensure that every required facility is fully operational before yatra begins.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Superintending Engineer R&B and KPDCL, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Kangan, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat and officers of various line departments, security agencies and stakeholders associated with Yatra management.

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR DISTRICT EMPLOYMENT & COUNSELLING CENTRE, BUDGAM

Phone No-01951-351030

Subject: Selection Notification for engagement of Contractual positions of SBDU and BHDs under Mission YUVA.

Order No. 54-DECC of 2026

Dated: 09 .06.2026

Whereas, Selections for the engagement of Contractual Positions of SBDU and BHDs under Mission YUVA was made vide Order No. DDCC/PS/34 of 2026 Dated 11-05-2026 and subsequently only 15 candidates joined in response to the above mentioned order. However as per Operational guidelines of Mission YUVA a waiting list of 9 candidates was already prepared and published vide the above mentioned notification No. for filling of vacancies arising out of non joining and resignation. However after passing of the stipulated period of 7 days 3 candidates viz Syeda Salma (Sbdu lead), Mushtaq Ahmed Bhat (BHD Coordinator), Dawood Ahmed (BHD Lead) didn't join and one candidate namely Azra mehraj who had joined as SBDU enterprise development expert submitted her resignation. As such these posts remain vacant, however as per the Mission YUVA operational guidelines a waiting list of 9 candidates was already prepared for filling the vacancies arising out of resignation or non joining of candidates within the stipulated joining period. Now, on the basis of applicable Mission YUVA guidelines, following 03 candidates from waiting list are found qualifying for the vacant post of SBDU Lead, BHD Lead and BHD Coordinator in accordance to their merit and preference and accordingly the selection list is enclosed as Annexure-A.

Nature of Engagement

The engagement shall be purely contractual and governed by the terms and conditions stipulated in the Mission YUVA guidelines. It shall not confer any right or claim for permanent absorption or continuation beyond the approved project period.

2. Contractual Duration and Renewal

- The initial period of engagement shall be eleven (11) months from the date of joining.
- Upon completion of the initial term, performance shall be reviewed based on predefined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) specified by Mission YUVA.
- The contract may be renewed for a further period of eleven (11) months, subject to satisfactory performance and approval from the competent authority, till the project life of Mission YUVA.

3. Roles and Reporting:

Duties and reporting structure will align with guidelines laid down in the Operational Guidelines of Mission YUVA.

4. Terms and Conditions

1. The selected candidate shall report to the Deputy Director Employment, DE&CC Budgam (Member secretary Mission YUVA) along with following documents, in original, within 07 (seven) days of issuance of this order for completion of joining formalities and verification of original documents.

- Domicile Certificate.
- Date of Birth
- All Qualifications Certificates.
- Experience Certificates
- Undertaking.
- Character certificate issued by competent authority.

2. Failure to report within the stipulated time shall be treated as unwillingness to join.

3. The candidate shall execute a formal contractual agreement specifying:

- Terms of engagement and service conditions
- Specific roles, responsibilities, and deliverables
- Performance evaluation and reporting mechanisms
- Compensation structure and payment terms
- Disciplinary and termination provisions

4. The engagement shall be subject to verification of character, antecedents and all documents and experience certificates.

5. The monthly consolidated remuneration shall be paid as per the norms prescribed in the Mission YUVA guidelines for the respective post, subject to verification of all documents and experience certificates.

6. The appointee shall maintain the highest standards of integrity, discipline, and confidentiality while discharging official duties.

5. Termination of Contract

The contractual engagement may be terminated at any time under the following conditions:

- Non-performance or unsatisfactory performance as per periodic evaluations.
- Violation of code of conduct, insubordination, or any act of misconduct.
- Falsification or misrepresentation of documents.
- Prolonged unauthorized absence beyond seven consecutive working days.
- Engagement in activities conflicting with the objectives of Mission YUVA or involving political affiliations.

The CEO Mission YUVA / Director Employment / SPV upon recommendation of the District Nodal Officers shall have the absolute authority to terminate the contract of any SBDU and BHD personnel at any time during the contract period, with appropriate notice as per the contractual agreement.

All terms and conditions shall be governed as per Mission YUVA operational guidelines for SBDUs and BHDs.

Sd/-

Addl. District Dev. Commissioner, (Nodal Officer, Mission YUVA), Budgam

No: DE&CC/BUD/MISSIONYUVA/359-63

Dated: 09/06/2026

DIPK-1963/26 DATED: 09-06-2026

AIIMS Awantipora to transform Kashmir's healthcare landscape: Sanjay Seth

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Awantipora, Jun 09: Union Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth on Tuesday visited the upcoming AIIMS Awantipora in south Kashmir's Pulwama district and described the institution as a landmark healthcare project that will significantly improve medical facilities for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

During his visit, the minister reviewed the progress of the prestigious project and interacted with officials overseeing the construction.

Speaking to reporters at AIIMS Awantipora he said the establishment of AIIMS Awantipora reflects the Centre's commitment to strengthening healthcare infrastructure in the region and ensuring that residents have access to world-class medical treatment closer to home.

Seth said Jammu and Kashmir has undergone remarkable transformation over the past decade, with visible improvements in multiple sectors including healthcare, tourism, connectivity and economic development.

He highlighted the growing influx of tourists to the Union Territory, stating that Jammu and Kashmir continues to emerge as one of the country's most sought-after travel destinations. According to the minister, tourist arrivals have witnessed a substantial rise, reflecting



increasing confidence among visitors and showcasing the region's peaceful environment and improved facilities.

Seth also pointed to the revival of Kashmir's film industry, noting that the Valley has once again become a preferred destination for filmmakers from across the country. He said Kashmir, once known as the backdrop for numerous iconic films, is regaining its place on India's cinematic map after years of decline.

"The return of filmmakers and tourists in large numbers demonstrates the positive changes taking place in Jammu and Kashmir. The region is progressing steadily on the path of peace, prosperity and development," he said.

The minister recalled his long association with Kashmir, saying he

has been visiting the Valley since the 1970s and has personally witnessed the transformation that has taken place over the decades.

"There is a visible difference between the Kashmir of earlier years and the Kashmir of today. Infrastructure development, improved public services and growing economic opportunities have brought about significant changes that can be seen across the region," he remarked.

Highlighting the achievements of Kashmir's traditional industries, Seth said the Valley's cricket bat manufacturing sector has also gained international recognition. He noted that locally produced bats are now being exported to several countries, providing employment

opportunities and strengthening the region's economy.

Speaking about the AIIMS project, the minister termed it one of the most significant healthcare initiatives undertaken for the people of Kashmir. He said the institution would greatly reduce the burden on patients who currently travel outside the Union Territory for advanced medical treatment.

"With AIIMS becoming operational, patients will have access to specialised healthcare services within Jammu and Kashmir itself. This facility will not only benefit Kashmir but the entire region by providing modern medical care and advanced treatment facilities," he said.

Seth further highlighted the expansion of premier healthcare institutions across the country, stating that India has witnessed a major increase in the number of AIIMS established over the past decade. He also praised the implementation of the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme, describing it as a revolutionary initiative that has made quality healthcare more accessible and affordable for millions of citizens.

The minister expressed confidence that AIIMS Awantipora would emerge as a centre of excellence in medical education, research and patient care, providing a major boost to the healthcare sector in Jammu and Kashmir—(KNO)

MP Ruhullah to join NC's statehood protest

■ Says Article-370 remains a primary demand



JAHANGEER GANAIE

Pulwama, Jun 09: Member of Parliament (MP), Aga Ruhullah Mehdi on Tuesday said he would participate in the National Conference's proposed protest for statehood at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, but asserted that restoration of Article 370 remains his primary political demand.

"The struggle for Jammu and Kashmir's rights cannot be limited to a one-day demonstration or the demand for statehood alone," Ruhullah said, speaking to reporters in Pulwama.

The MP said he would "definitely" join the protest planned by the NC. "However, the political aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir extend beyond the restoration of statehood and include the reinstatement of constitutional protections that existed before August 2019," he stressed.

Mehdi said that while the demand for statehood is important, it should not overshadow what he described as the larger political and constitutional issues facing the region. According to him, a single protest or symbolic political event would not be sufficient to address the concerns of the people; instead called for a sustained, organised and long-term political movement.

"The struggle should focus on securing justice, protecting rights and addressing the 'erosion' of constitutional safeguards," he said.

Highlighting the challenges faced by the younger generation since the constitutional changes of 2019, the MP said justice remains a prerequisite for

achieving lasting peace in the region. He observed that many young people continue to face uncertainty and frustration, and that their concerns require serious political attention.

Ruhullah also raised concerns over issues related to land rights, employment opportunities and reservation policies. He alleged that local residents were increasingly being deprived of opportunities that rightfully belonged to them and expressed concern over policies that, according to him, have adversely impacted sections of the population.

Referring to rural areas, including parts of Pulwama district, he claimed that restrictions affecting agriculture and traditional livelihoods have created hardships for many families. He described these issues as examples of a wider pattern of injustice that needs urgent redressal.

Mehdi further said that several political and administrative commitments made to the people of Jammu and Kashmir remain unfulfilled.

Ruhullah reiterated that meaningful and permanent peace cannot be achieved through symbolic measures alone. "Peace comes through justice," he said, maintaining that addressing core political concerns is essential for creating long-term stability in the region.

The MP criticised the pace of governance in Jammu and Kashmir over the past two years, saying that several pressing issues remain unresolved despite repeated public demands. He pointed to concerns surrounding reservation policies, rising unemployment and the continued detention of hundreds of youth, who, he claimed, remain in jails without trial.

"People cannot be expected to remain satisfied if the promises made to them are not fulfilled, he said.

"The government must address these concerns through concrete action and meaningful engagement," the MP said, adding that public trust can only be restored when commitments are translated into tangible outcomes on the ground—(KNO)

Govt appoints Suresh Kumar Gupta as SWRRA chairperson

KNO

Srinagar, Jun 09: The Jammu & Kashmir on Tuesday appointed Suresh Kumar Gupta, a retired Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer, as chairperson of J&K State Water Resources Regulatory Authority.

In an order, Gupta has been appointed a head of the J&K State Water Resources Regulatory Authority.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by section 139 of the Jammu and Kashmir Water Resources (Regulation and Management) Act, 2010, the Government of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir hereby appoint Mr. Suresh Kumar Gupta, IFS (Retd.) as Chairperson of the Jammu and Kashmir Water Resources Regulatory Authority," reads notification, a copy of which is in possession of news agency-Kashmir News Observer.

According to the notification, the appointment of Chairperson shall take effect from the date he assumes the charge of the post in the Authority.

The Government has also appointed Manoj Gupta, Chief Engineer as Member of the Jammu and Kashmir Water Resources Regulatory Authority.

With these appointments, the number of members which including chairperson has gone upto three. Rajesh Sharma, a former IAS officer, is currently serving as member and was appointed in 2024.

Jammu & Kashmir State Water Resources Regulatory Authority is a quasi-judicial body mandated to regulate, manage, and ensure the sustainable use of water resources across the Union Territory. It sets tariffs, monitors projects, resolves disputes, and advises the government on conservation and long-term water management strategies—(KNO)

Gulmarg Gondola closure extended indefinitely

WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Jun 09: The Jammu and Kashmir Cable Car Corporation (JKCC) has extended the closure of the Gulmarg Gondola indefinitely, two weeks after a major technical malfunction left more than 300 tourists stranded mid-air and triggered a massive rescue operation.

In a fresh communique, the corporation stated that the Gondola will remain closed for tourists until further notice as maintenance and safety assessments continue.

"The inconvenience caused is regretted", reads an official communique.

The Gondola has remained non-operational since May 25, when a technical snag halted services and trapped over 300 tourists in suspended cabins.

A detailed technical inspection of the cable car system followed, while engineers have since been carrying out extensive maintenance work, safety audits and operational checks to ensure the facility is fit for public use before services are restored.

The latest announcement comes days after JKCC had indicated that the Gondola would remain closed till June 8. However, with maintenance work still underway, the corporation has now withheld any specific timeline for reopening.

Officials said services will resume only after all technical issues are addressed and the system receives the necessary safety clearances—(KNO)

Sakeena Itoo reviews healthcare arrangements for Muharram



KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, June 09: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo on Tuesday chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess and strengthen healthcare arrangements being put in place for the forthcoming holy month of Muharram-ul-Haram.

During the meeting, the Minister took a detailed appraisal of the preparedness of the Health Department to ensure seamless medical services for devotees participating in Muharram processions and gatherings.

The meeting was attended by MLA Uri, Dr. Sajjad Shafi; MLA Khansahib, Saifuddin Bhat; MLA Beerwah Dr. Shafi Ahmad; MLA Zadibal, Tanvir Ali Sadiq; MLA Lal Chowk, Sheikh Ahsan Pardesti; MD NHM, MD JKMSCL, Director SKIMS, Principals of all GMCs, Director Health Kashmir, Director ISM, CMOs and other senior officers of health department.

Addressing the participants in the meeting, the Minister emphasized on the need for a coordinated and proactive approach to provide prompt healthcare facilities

at all designated congregation points and procession routes.

She directed the administrators of SKIMS, JVC Hospital, SMHS and other city hospitals to establish medical camps for the facilitation of mourners during this holy month.

The Minister instructed officers to establish round-the-clock medical camps at identified venues and ensure availability of specialist doctors, paramedical staff and life-saving drugs. She also called for strengthening emergency preparedness in hospitals to cater to any unforeseen situation.

The Minister asked them to keep Ambulances on alert so that the patients can be shifted to health facilities without losing time. She also directed them to make people aware beforehand about the availability of ambulances at designated spots.

Sakeena Itoo directed the concerned officers to ensure deployment of adequate medical teams, emergency response units and essential medicines at key locations. She stressed that all health institutions, particularly those located along major procession routes, should remain fully equipped and prepared to handle any medical exigency during the

observance period.

Highlighting the importance of public convenience and safety, Sakeena Itoo directed the officers to maintain close coordination with district administrations and other line departments for effective implementation of healthcare arrangements. She also underscored the need for uninterrupted functioning of ambulance services and emergency healthcare facilities throughout the holy month.

The Minister further stressed on ensuring adequate stock of essential medicines, blood supplies and emergency medical equipment in all major healthcare institutions. She asked officials to conduct regular monitoring of arrangements and address any gaps well in advance.

Reaffirming the Government's commitment towards facilitating smooth and peaceful observance of Muharram-ul-Haram, Sakeena Itoo stated that every possible effort would be made to provide quality healthcare services and ensure the well-being of devotees.

During the meeting, the MLAs also spoke on various issues and sought seamless arrangements for the facilitation of devotees.

Ayushman Bharat-SEHAT

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Jun 09: The J&K Private Hospitals and Dialysis Centres Association (JKPHDA) has announced its proposed de-empanelment from the Ayushman Bharat-SEHAT Scheme with effect from July 1, 2026, citing prolonged delays in reimbursement of claims, financial distress, and alleged non-compliance with National Health Authority (NHA) guidelines. The development could significantly impact healthcare delivery across Jammu and Kashmir.

JKPHDA said that despite repeated representations, empanelled private healthcare institutions continue to face long delays in receiving payments for services already rendered under the scheme. "Private hospitals

have continued to provide critical healthcare services in good faith and in the larger public interest. However, the prolonged blockage of legitimate reimbursements has reached an unsustainable level and is severely affecting the functioning of healthcare institutions across Jammu and Kashmir," a spokesperson of the Association said.

The Association said that private hospitals play a crucial role in delivering specialised healthcare services, including dialysis, oncology treatment, intensive care, emergency services, cardiac interventions, trauma care, and major surgical procedures. "Maintaining these services requires uninterrupted procurement of medicines, consumables, implants, diagnostic equipment and the retention of skilled healthcare professionals. Delayed

reimbursements directly affect our ability to meet these obligations," the spokesperson added. JKPHDA expressed particular concern over the impact of global geopolitical developments on healthcare costs, saying that ongoing tensions in the Middle East have disrupted international supply chains and significantly increased prices of essential medical products, including cancer medicines such as Cisplatin and Carboplatin, as well as cardiac stents and orthopaedic implants.

The Association also raised concerns over what it described as an imbalance in fund utilisation, claiming that while private hospitals struggle with unpaid claims, more than Rs 180 crore of Ayushman Bharat funds are reportedly lying unutilised with public hospitals.

"Paying public hospitals at the cost of private

hospitals is like transferring money from one government pocket to another without serving the intended objective," it said.

JKPHDA further contended that delays in claim processing violate contractual provisions, noting that, as per Section 6 of the Memorandum of Understanding, empanelled hospitals are entitled to receive one per cent interest per week on delayed payments, a provision from which hospitals have been deprived. In view of the worsening situation, JKPHDA announced that private hospitals and dialysis centres across J&K have collectively resolved to begin the process of de-empanelment from July 1, 2026, unless immediate corrective measures are taken.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

NDPS action, public support key to combat drug menace: IGP Kashmir

REHAN QAYOUM MIR

Srinagar, Jun 09: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir V.K. Birdi on Tuesday said strict action against drug peddlers under the NDPS Act and PIT-NDPS law and active public participation are crucial to effectively combat the drug menace in Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking at a programme organised by the Central Government Pensioners Welfare Association in Kothibagh, the IGP said J&K Police has been continuously acting tough against drug peddlers and smugglers under stringent legal provisions. "The police are taking strict action under NDPS and PIT-NDPS laws. But this is not a fight that can be won by enforcement alone. Society's participation is equally important," Birdi said. He said the approach towards drug abuse in society has evolved over time, noting a shift from "denial mode to acceptance mode," which has helped in better identification and response to drug-related issues.

"People are now aware and coming forward. Once the problem is acknowledged, resolution becomes possible with collective efforts of police, family members, teachers and society at large," he added.

Referring to the Nasha Mukta Bharat campaign, the IGP said it is not merely a government initiative but a people-driven movement witnessing voluntary participation across society. "This is a collective fight. Police, administration and society all have defined roles," he said.

The Kashmir police chief appreciated the initiative of involving youth and stakeholders in awareness programmes, saying such efforts will strengthen long-term social responsibility and community engagement. On upcoming arrangements, the IGP said preparations



for the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra are underway, along with coordination meetings for the upcoming Muharram, ensuring smooth arrangements and public convenience.

"The district administrations are actively engaging with local committees to ensure peaceful observance of Muharram and hassle-free conduct of the Yatra," he said.

Responding to queries on digital governance, Birdi said initiatives like pension apps reflect the use of technology for improved service delivery and similar systems are being explored in other districts as well—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

A Breakthrough That Connects Dreams

The Zojila Tunnel has achieved its final breakthrough. Union Minister Nitin Gadkari termed it a "golden chapter" in India's infrastructure history. This 13.15 km all-weather tunnel, running from Baltal near Sonamarg to Meenamarg in the Drass-Kargil region at an altitude of approximately 11,578 feet, is not just an engineering marvel but a lifeline. For decades, the Zojila Pass remained closed for nearly half the year due

to heavy snowfall, avalanches, and harsh weather. This isolation cut off Ladakh from the rest of the country every winter. The tunnel will change this forever. Once opened by February 2028, it will provide all-weather connectivity between Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Travel time will be drastically reduced. Strategic mobility will be strengthened. Trade, tourism, and economic activity will get a massive boost. This is the kind

of transformation that changes lives on the ground. The government deserves full credit for prioritising this project after 2014. Multiple tender attempts had failed earlier, but the persistence paid off. The tunnel has been built to global safety standards despite challenging terrain and harsh weather. Nearly 80% of the workforce comprised local labour, which means the project has also generated employment in the region.

Infrastructure like the Zojila Tunnel uplifts entire regions. It connects people, markets, and dreams. The government deserves full credit for pushing this strategically vital project despite immense challenges. The tunnel is being built by Megha Engineering & Infrastructure Ltd. for NHIDCL. Over 1,100 personnel are working on the project. Electrical systems are being installed, with some equipment procured from Russia. This

is a historic day for the region. The Zojila Tunnel will soon end the winter isolation of Ladakh. It will bring year-round connectivity, security, and prosperity. This is not just a breakthrough in rock. It is a breakthrough in hope. And India must celebrate it because development is not just about schemes. It is also about roads that never close, tunnels that conquer mountains, and a nation that refuses to leave any region behind.

Empowering The Poor: A Decade Of Inclusive Transformation

Over the past twelve years, India's sustained public interventions have expanded access to essential services, reducing deprivation across underprivileged households. Nearly 25 crore people escaped multidimensional poverty through expanded welfare delivery and social protection measures. Rural tap water coverage increased from 3.23 crore households in 2019 to 15.84 crore by May 2026. Over 12.11 crore household toilets were built, raising rural sanitation coverage from 39% in 2014 to universal coverage. PM Ujjwala Yojana provided over 10.57 crore free LPG connections. Ayushman Bharat issued 43.93 crore health cards. PMGKAY ensured free foodgrains for over 81 crore beneficiaries. Female primary school dropout rates declined sharply from 4.6% in 2013-14 to 0.3% in 2024-25.

Strategic Paradigms in Poverty Alleviation

Average inflation declined from 8.1% during 2004-2014 to 5.1% during 2014-2025. Multidimensional poverty declined sharply from 29.17% in 2013-14 to 11.28% in 2022-23 - a 17.89 percentage-point reduction. Nearly 25 crore people were lifted out of multidimensional poverty during this period.

Universal Access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM): Launched in 2019, fiscal allocations expanded by approximately 488% between 2020-21 and 2026-27, reaching 67,670 crore. Household tap water coverage increased from 3.23 crore in August 2019 to 15.84 crore by May 2026, covering 81.87% of total 19.35 crore households. Moreover, 2.77 lakh villages achieved 100% tap water coverage.

In Aspirational Districts, household tap water coverage increased from 23.62 lakh in August 2019 to 2.20 crore by May 2026. Schools with tap water connectivity increased from 29,711 to 9.23 lakh. Anganwadi Centres with tap water rose from 15,464 to 9.66 lakh.

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan - Urban: Budget outlay increased from 62,009 crore under SBM-U Phase 1 (2014-2021) to 1.41 lakh crore under SBM-U 2.0 (2021-2026) - an increase of approximately 128.3%. Door-to-door waste collection increased from 43% in 2014 to 98% in 2026. Waste processing rose from 16% in 2014 to 82% in 2026. Individual household toilets completed: 63.74 lakh units (108.62% of target). Community and public toilets: 6.36 lakh units (125.46% of target). 4,692 cities declared Open Defecation Free (ODF); 4,314 cities certified as ODF+; 1,973 cities as ODF++.

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan - Grameen: Budget allocations increased from 3,929 crore in 2014-15 to 7,192 crore in 2026-27. Over 12.11 crore individual household toilets constructed. Sanitation coverage increased from 39% in 2014 to 100% in 2019. India declared ODF in 2019. As of March 2026, over 5 lakh villages attained ODF Plus status.

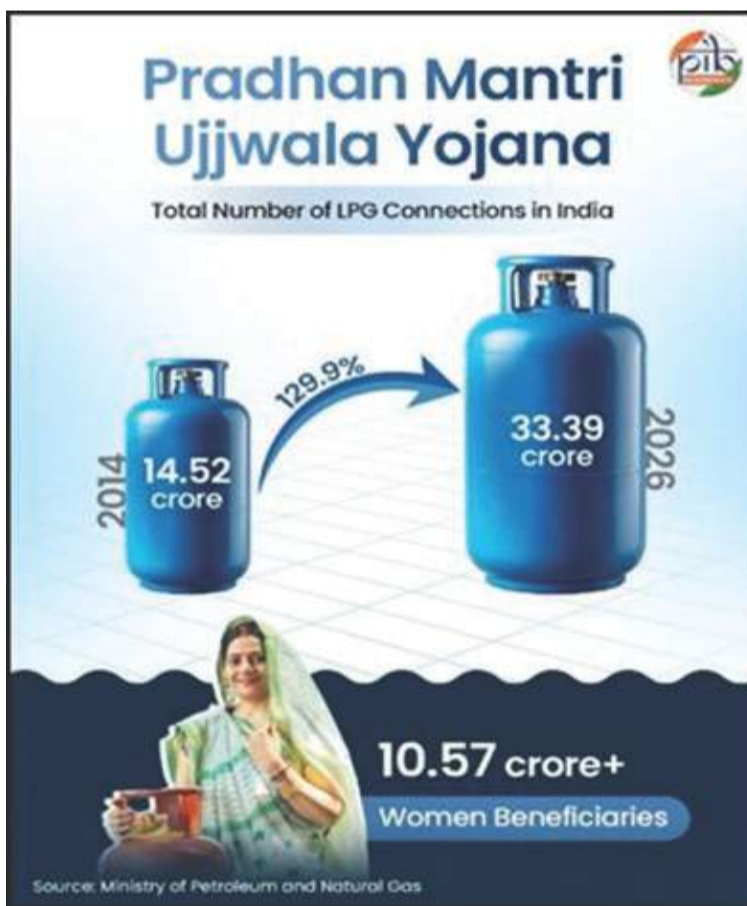
Clean Cooking, Renewable Energy, and Rural Electrification

PM Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY): Launched in 2016, as of May 2026, over 10.57 crore free LPG connections provided to women from BPL households. Total LPG connections increased from 14.52 crore in 2014 to 33.39 crore in 2026 - a rise of around 129.9%.

PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana: Launched in 2024, budget allocation increased to 22,000 crore in 2026-27 from 6,250 crore in 2024-25. As of April 2026, the scheme benefitted 36.8 lakh households.

Universal Village Electrification: Under SAUBHAGYA (launched 2017), 100% of willing households were electrified nationwide by March 2019. Under DDUJGY (launched 2014), 100% village electrification achieved by 2025. Average daily electricity supply in rural areas increased from 12.5 hours in FY2014 to 22.6 hours in FY2025; in urban areas from 22.1 to 23.4 hours.

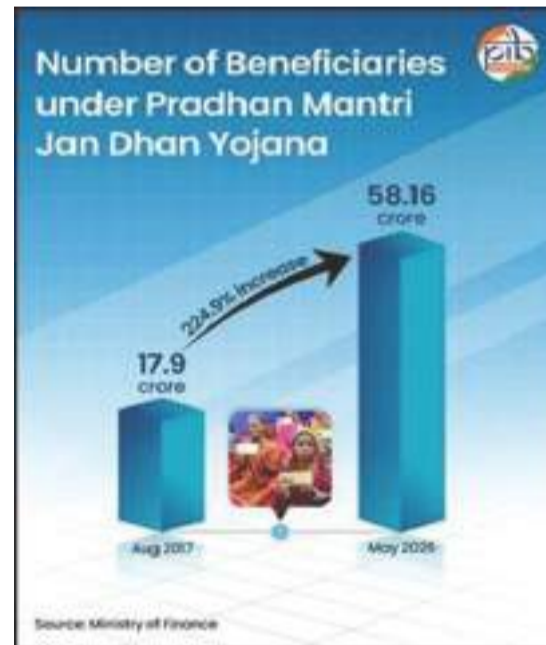
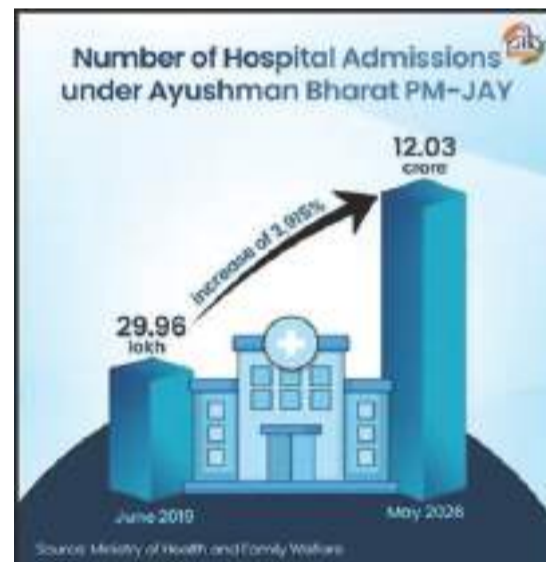
Public Health and Food Security Systems: Ayushman Bharat - PMJAY: Launched in September 2018, provides annual



health insurance coverage of 5 lakh per family to nearly 12.37 crore economically vulnerable families. As of May 2026, over 43.93 crore Ayushman Cards issued. Hospitalizations increased from 29.96 lakh in June 2019 to 12.03 crore by May 2026, with total treatment costs of 1.80 lakh crore. ABDM introduced Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts - 88.33 crore ABHA accounts created. Over 1.85 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs facilitated 540 crore visits. Under Ayushman Bharat Vay Vandana Yojana, more than 1.20 crore senior citizens enrolled, with approximately 13.84 lakh treatments delivered at cost exceeding 3,000 crore. AIIMS operational increased from 8 (1947-2014) to 15 in the last 12 years. Child & Maternal Health Interventions: Under PMSMA, over 7 crore antenatal check-ups conducted. Mission Indradhanush immunized 5.46 crore children and 1.32 crore pregnant women. Maternal Mortality Ratio declined from 130 per 100,000 live births (2014-16) to 88 (2021-23). First-trimester antenatal care visits rose from 59% to 76.2% between 2015-16 and 2023-24. Food Security: PMGKAY (launched 2020)

provides free foodgrains to over 81 crore beneficiaries, extended for five years in January 2024. Over 5.50 lakh (99.8%) of Fair Price Shops are automated for Aadhaar-based distribution. One Nation One Ration Card has facilitated over 2.07 billion transactions. Stunting among children declined from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 29.3% (NFHS-6); underweight children fell from 35.8% to 31.8%. Education Access and Learning Outcomes: Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan: Launched in 2018-19, 4,073 schools upgraded, 1.49 lakh ICT and digital initiatives implemented, 25,000 schools covered under skill education. Schools with functional female sanitation facilities expanded from 13.5 lakh in 2013-14 to 14.2 lakh by 2024-25. Female drop-out rate at primary school decreased from 4.6% (2013-14) to 0.3% (2024-25); at secondary school from 14.5% to 11.5%. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: Launched in 2015, sex ratio improved from 943 (Census 2011) to 1,020 females per 1,000 males by 2021. Secondary school enrolment for girls expanded from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 80.2% by 2024-25. Kasturba Balika Vidyalayas: Sanctioned

KGBVs increased from 3,609 in 2014-15 to 5,639 in 2024-25. Student enrolment increased from 3.52 lakh in 2014-15 to 7.11 lakh in 2024. Infrastructure and Connectivity: Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Urban: Budget allocations rose from 4,175 crore in 2015-16 to 18,625 crore in 2026-27 (increase of 346.1%). Over 98.10 lakh houses completed between 2015 and 2026, compared to only 8.04 lakh during 2005-2014. Around 96% of houses under PMAY-U 2.0 are registered in the name of a woman. PMAY - Gramin: Budget allocations increased from 21 crore in 2015-16 to 54,917 crore in 2026-27 (growth of approximately 2.61 lakh%). 3.91 crore houses sanctioned and 3.03 crore completed as of May 2026. Around 75% of beneficiaries are women. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY): Budget allocation increased from 386 crore (2014-15) to 19,000 crore (2026-27). 99.6% of eligible habitations connected with all-weather roads. Completed road length increased from 3.86 lakh km (2000-2014) to 4.11 lakh km (2014-2026). Completed bridges rose from



484 to 10,256. Livelihoods, Skills, and Financial Security DAY-NRLM: Women's participation in SHGs increased from 2.37 crore to 10 crore. SHGs rose from 21.31 lakh to 91.75 lakh. Loan disbursement expanded from 22,944 crore to 1.2 lakh crore. Lakhpati Didi (launched 2023) has enabled 3.07 crore rural women to become entrepreneurs. Over 9 lakh Community Resource Persons currently active.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY): Over 1.64 crore youth have received skill training since inception. Under PMKVY 4.0, 27.43 lakh candidates trained across 38 sectors focusing on emerging skills such as AI and Industry 4.0.

Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin): Persondays generated increased from 1,660 crore (FY 2006-14) to 3,036.7 crore (FY 2014-25). Women's participation increased from 48% to 58.19%.

eShram Portal: Registrations increased from 14.40 crore (Dec 2021) to 31.64 crore (May 2026).

PM Vishwakarma Yojana (launched 2023): Over 30 lakh artisans registered; 23.97 lakh received skill training; 5.92 lakh artisans received sanctioned credit.

PM SVANidhi: Beneficiaries increased from 26.37 lakh (Nov 2021) to 75.27 lakh (May 2026). Cumulative loan disbursements reached 17,710.55 crore; female beneficiaries account for 46%.

Stand Up India Scheme (inaugurated 2016): Sanctioned 62,807.46 crore to 2.75 lakh beneficiaries.

Social Security Coverage - Atal Pension Yojana: Beneficiaries increased from 48.80 lakh in 2016-17 to 8.96 crore in 2025-26

- PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana: 27.33 crore beneficiaries covered

- PM Suraksha Bima Yojana: 57.92 crore people covered

- PM Shram Yogi Maan-dhan: 52.99 lakh unorganized workers registered

Financial Inclusion: Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana: Cumulative loan accounts expanded from 3.49 crore in 2016 to over 57 crore by 2026. Approximately 49% of loans sanctioned to entrepreneurs from SC/ST/OBC communities. 66% of loans (38.29 crore), amounting to 16.88 lakh crore, disbursed to women entrepreneurs.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (launched 2014): Beneficiaries increased from 17.9 crore (Aug 2015) to 58.16 crore (May 2026) - increase of around 224.9%. Total balance in these accounts stands at 3.02 lakh crore. 13.55 lakh Bank Mitras delivering branchless banking services.

Tribal Development: PM-JANMAN (launched 2023): As of February 2026, 2.66 lakh houses, 1,949 km of roads, 750 Mobile Medical Units completed; piped drinking water access to 8,473 villages; electrified 1.36 lakh households; operationalized 2,390 Anganwadi centres.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools: Operational schools increased from 129 (2014-15) to 499 (May 2026), with enrolment of 1.54 lakh students.

From Antyodaya to Sarvodaya: India's welfare architecture has evolved from entitlement-based delivery toward saturation-driven coverage. Sustained public investment, targeted welfare interventions, and technology-enabled governance expanded access to basic amenities and better livelihood opportunities. Women-led development, grassroots entrepreneurship, and SHG-driven economic participation have emerged as key pillars of this transformation. Together, these interventions reflect a broader movement from "Antyodaya to Sarvodaya" - empowering the most vulnerable sections while driving national growth.

Disclaimer: This is an abridged version of the original PIB article "Empowering the Poor: A Decade of Inclusive Transformation" (June 8, 2026). Key facts and data have been retained. For the complete article, please refer to the official PIB website.

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Govt committed to ensure adequate facilities for observance of Muharram-ul-Haram across J&K: Dy CM Visits Imam Baras, religious sites across Srinagar to review preparations

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 09: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary on Tuesday undertook an extensive tour of several Shia-majority areas of Srinagar to review the arrangements being put in place for smooth and peaceful observance of the forthcoming holy month of Muharram-ul-Haram.

During the day-long visit, the Deputy Chief Minister, as per an official statement, inspected various Imam Baras and prominent religious sites, including the revered Shrine of Mir Shams-ud-Din Araki (RA) at Zadibal, the historic Imam Bara Zadibal and historic Imam Bara Hassanabad.

He assessed the facilities and services being arranged for the devotees and mourners during the holy month.

The Deputy Chief Minister, accompanied by MLA Hazratbal, Salman Ali Sagar and MLA Zadibal, Tanvir Sadiq, also visited Imam Bara Gulshan Bagh, Baghwanpora, Nawabagh in Lal



Bazar and Bota Kadal, where he interacted with the local representatives and residents to gather first-hand feedback regarding the ongoing preparations.

During the inspection, the Deputy Chief Minister directed the concerned departments to ensure seamless inter-departmental coordination and make

all necessary arrangements for uninterrupted healthcare services, drinking water supply, electricity, sanitation, road connectivity, street lighting and other essential civic amenities.

"Deploy water tanks in all the affected areas on regular basis so that the residents do not face any inconvenience during the

Muharram observance," he said.

The Deputy Chief Minister instructed the officers to maintain round-the-clock readiness and establish effective grievance redressal mechanism for prompt resolution of the public concerns.

Senior officers from various departments accompanied the

Deputy Chief Minister during the visit and briefed him on the arrangements and developmental works underway in their respective areas.

The Deputy Chief Minister assured the public that the government remains fully committed to ensure adequate facilities and a conducive environment for observance of Muharram-ul-Haram across J&K.

Later, the Deputy Chief Minister visited the Soura area and reviewed progress on key infrastructure projects, including the Donibagh-Soura road widening project. He directed the concerned authorities to remove the existing bottlenecks and encroachments hampering the pace of work. He stressed the need for ensuring smooth traffic movement and improved connectivity for the public.

He also reviewed the status of ongoing City Gateway development works in the Hazratbal and Zadibal areas and called for their timely completion while maintaining the highest standards of quality.

Rana lays foundation for flood protection works at Fattu Kotli Inspects damaged Tawi embankment at Bhagatpur



KT News Desk

JAMMU, JUNE 09: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, on Tuesday laid the foundation stone for restoration and construction of flood protection works worth 2.47 crore at Fattu Kotli, Garkhal along the left bank of River Chenab.

The Minister, as per an official statement, was accompanied by MLA Akhnoor, Mohan Lal Bhagat and senior officers from the department.

Addressing on the occasion, the Minister affirmed that strengthening flood management infrastructure remains a top priority for the government and the intervention at Fattu Kotli will bolster the resilience of vulnerable areas against flood threats. He underlined the importance of building durable and effective protective structures along the vulnerable riverbanks to safeguard the lives, property and agricultural land from the recurring menace of floods.

Javed Rana emphasised that with the monsoon season

approaching, it is imperative to expedite flood protection works across the Union Territory. He directed the concerned departments and executing agencies to ensure timely completion of the works with strict adherence to prescribed quality standards, leaving no room for delays or lapses.

The Minister reiterated the government's commitment towards developing robust flood mitigation infrastructure and assured that all vulnerable stretches along the major rivers would be addressed on priority. He called upon the officers to adopt a proactive and responsive approach towards maintenance and strengthening of existing protective structures ahead of the approaching monsoon, particularly in areas susceptible to erosion and inundation.

Earlier, the Minister also inspected the damaged Tawi embankment at Bhagatpur village in Marh Block of Jammu district.

During his visit to Bhagatpur, the Minister inspected the damaged portion of the Tawi embankment and sought detailed report from the officers regarding the restoration plan.

MP Ruhullah Mehdi convenes Public Darbar in Pulwama



KT News Desk

PULWAMA, JUNE 09: Member of Parliament, Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency, Agha Syed Ruhullah Mehdi Tuesday convened a Public Darbar at Circuit House Pulwama to listen to public grievances and developmental concerns of the people.

During the interaction, delegations from various areas of the district besides representatives of trade bodies, social organizations, Auqaf committees, senior citizens and other stakeholders projected a wide range of public issues and development demands.

The issues raised during the Public Darbar pertained to various sectors including education, agriculture, horticulture, health, augmentation of sports infrastructure, widening and upgradation of roads, deployment of adequate staff

in health and educational institutions, traffic management and other developmental matters.

Addressing the gathering, the Member of Parliament assured the participants that issues requiring policy-level intervention would be taken up at appropriate forums, including forthcoming sessions of Parliament.

The MP further assured the public that their genuine concerns would be pursued for redressal. On the occasion, he also directed the officers of concerned departments to take prompt action on genuine grievances and issues raised during the interaction and ensure their timely resolution.

The Public Darbar witnessed participation from people and different stakeholders.

District and sectoral Officers of different departments attended the event.

Secretary DLSA Budgam visits Central Jail Srinagar

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, JUNE 09: As per plan of action for the month of June 2026 issued by J&K Legal Services Authority, Secretary, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Budgam, conducted a visit to the Central Jail Srinagar to review the functioning of legal aid services and interacted with inmates.

The programme, as per an official statement, was conducted under the guidance of O.P. Baghat, Chairman DLSA (Principal District & Sessions Judge) Budgam.

The visit was conducted in the presence of the Superintendent, Central Jail Srinagar, who accompanied the Secretary DLSA Budgam during the inspection of the Legal Aid Clinic, Mulaqati Area, and the awareness programme.

Amongst many good practices adopted by the jail administration, the Superintendent Central Jail Srinagar informed the Secretary, DLSA, Budgam, about the recent establishment of a separate cabin for breastfeeding mothers near the reception area of the jail. The Secretary appreciated this thoughtful and dignified initiative aimed at ensuring privacy, comfort, and convenience for



breastfeeding mothers visiting the prison. The Secretary expressed satisfaction over this welfare-oriented measure and lauded the efforts of the jail authorities in creating a more inclusive and humane environment for visitors.

During the visit, the Secretary inspected the Legal Aid Clinic functioning within the jail premises and assessed the legal assistance being provided to the inmates. The Secretary also visited the recently established Mulaqati Area and reviewed the facilities made available for prisoners and their visitors.

As part of the visit, a legal awareness programme was organized on the topics "Plea Bargaining" and "Rights of Prisoners." The programme aimed at sensitizing inmates about the legal remedies available to them and the rights guaranteed under law during

incarceration. Fozia Shafi, Assistant LADC Budgam and Minhaj, Assistant LADC Srinagar served as the resource persons for the programme who elaborated on the concept of plea bargaining, its legal framework, benefits, and procedure, while also educating the inmates about their fundamental and statutory rights as prisoners.

The Secretary interacted extensively with the inmates and apprised them of the current status of their respective cases. The inmates were encouraged to avail legal aid services whenever required and were assured of continued legal assistance through the Legal Services Institution.

The programme concluded with an interactive session wherein inmates raised various legal queries, which were addressed by the resource persons and officials present.

DC Shopian chairs meeting on identification of skill training needs of rural youth

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JUNE 09: In a decisive move to strengthen rural employment and foster grass-roots entrepreneurship, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta Tuesday convened a review meeting to identify the skill training needs of rural youth and strategically align local initiatives with Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs).

The meeting focused on mapping local employment landscapes, identifying high-demand, market-oriented skills, and establishing seamless coordination among various stakeholder departments. The aim is to deliver quality training and unlock sustainable, credit-linked self-employment avenues for the district's rural youth.

The DC stressed the necessity of transitioning towards a highly structured approach for skill mapping and market-driven training. He emphasized that establishing strong convergence with RSETIs is pivotal to equipping local youth with relevant modern skills and securing sustainable livelihoods across the district.



the ongoing courses taught through RSETIs and highlighted that proper, long-scale training is vital for creating high-quality local products.

The DC laid emphasis on scaling up the production of handicraft items, identifying them as highly important assets that require increased output and support. Recognizing the massive potential of women-led enterprises, he underscored that Self-Help Group (SHG) women play a critical role in driving this rural economic transformation.

To actively convert skills into viable businesses, the DC directed the concerned departments to facilitate the establishment of micro-production units, pointing out Garlic

and pickle units as immediate thrust areas.

Targeted distribution and enhanced availability of high-yielding seeds, root stock management to meet the heavy local demand in identified priority areas, facilitating youth in easy access to credit-linked self-employment schemes, amplifying public awareness and ensuring maximum participation of rural youth in skill development initiatives was emphasized.

GM DIC, Shurjil Naik; ACD, Muzafar Ahmad; SDM, Zainapora, Bilal Ahmed; Director, RSETI, CAO, CHO, representatives of employment, handicrafts and handloom and other concerned were present in the meeting.

NMJKA DIPR's Cultural Unit Kashmir organises awareness programme at GHS Aglar Kandi

KT News Desk

PULWAMA, JUNE 09: As part of the ongoing Nasha Mukta J&K Abhiyan (NMJKA), the Cultural Unit Kashmir of the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) organised a vibrant cultural awareness programme at Government High School (GHS) Aglar Kandi Tuesday.

The programme featured a variety of cultural performances aimed at raising awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse. Artists presented a thematic short play depicting the ill effects of substance abuse on individuals, families, and society. Renowned poets also recited thought-provoking poems highlighting the growing menace of drug addiction and the collective responsibility required to curb it.

Cultural Officer Kashmir, Abdul Raqib Bhat, emphasized the importance of organizing such outreach programmes and reiterated the department's commitment to conducting more awareness initiatives aimed at eradicating the menace of drugs from society.

AEO, Cultural Unit DIPR, Syed Shakeel Shan, spoke about



the crucial role of parental care and guidance in preventing substance abuse among youth. He also highlighted the Cultural Unit's ongoing efforts and initiatives in support of the Nasha Mukta J&K mission.

Students of the school actively participated in the programme and presented impactful skits and songs carrying strong anti-drug messages, which were widely appreciated by the audience.

Addressing the gathering, noted poet, writer and social activist G.M. Nowsoz observed that art and culture serve as powerful

tools for spreading awareness and inspiring positive social change, particularly on critical issues such as drug abuse.

The Headmaster of GHS Aglar, Mushtaq Ahmad Lone expressed gratitude to the Cultural Unit, DIPR, for organizing the programme and for creating awareness about this pressing social issue among students and the local community.

A large number of students, teachers, and local residents attended the programme and appreciated the department's efforts in promoting a drug-free society.

DC Kulgam visits Vessu Migrant Colony

KT News Desk

KULGAM, JUNE 09: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, Tuesday visited Vessu Migrant Colony, where he inaugurated a newly established Computer Lab aimed at enhancing digital literacy and providing learning opportunities to the residents.

During his visit, the Deputy Commissioner inspected various facilities available at the colony and interacted with residents to assess their needs and concerns.

The DC also participated and witnessed the Gram Sabha proceedings held at the colony.

During the Gram Sabha, residents actively registered and prioritized their developmental needs and requirements for inclusion in future development plans. Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the significance of community participation in the planning process and urged residents to actively engage in identifying and prioritizing local developmental works. He assured them that genuine demands and issues raised during the Gram Sabha would be taken into consideration for appropriate action.

The residents appreciated the district administration's efforts in strengthening public services and providing a platform for community-driven development.

PMAY 2.0 beneficiary list under scanner as Anantnag residents allege irregularities, demand probe

Jahangeer Ganaie

Anantnag, Jun 09: Allegations of large-scale irregularities in the beneficiary selection process under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) 2.0 have triggered widespread resentment in several parts of South Kashmir, with residents accusing authorities of including non-deserving individuals in the priority category while excluding many genuinely eligible families.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), people from Qazigund, Dooru, Kokeranag, Gadole and several other areas have raised

serious concerns over the recently published beneficiary lists, alleging that the exercise lacks transparency and has deprived many economically weaker households of benefits meant for them.

The aggrieved residents have demanded a comprehensive review of the lists, fresh ground verification and an independent investigation into the alleged discrepancies. Some residents have even sought a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), claiming that only an impartial inquiry can restore public confidence in the scheme.

Many residents said they had been waiting for years with the

hope of receiving assistance under the housing scheme but were left shocked after finding their names either missing from the list or placed in the non-priority category.

"I have been waiting for nearly five years hoping that my case would finally be considered. When the list was released, I was surprised to see my name placed in the non-priority category," said Gul Mohammad, a resident of Panzath Qazigund.

"What hurts even more is that several people who already have proper concrete houses have been included in the priority list. We fail to understand the criteria adopted for this selection,"

he added.

Similar allegations have emerged from Gadole and adjoining areas, where several residents claimed they continue to live in tin sheds and temporary structures but were either omitted altogether or categorized as non-priority beneficiaries.

"We have no permanent shelter and have been living in difficult conditions for years. Despite this, our names are nowhere to be found in the priority list. We want authorities to physically verify every household before finalizing the beneficiaries," said a local resident from Gadole.

Residents questioned the credibility of the verification

process and alleged that local-level data available with field functionaries should have prevented such errors.

They said that mistakes of officials shouldn't prevent deserving persons from getting the benefits of the govt schemes.

"Officials are saying that names may have been deleted due to a system issue. But if that is the case, what role are the ground staff such as Gram Rozgar Sevaks (GRSs), Village Level Workers (VLWs) and other officials supposed to play? They have complete knowledge of local households and maintain records. Such discrepancies should have been detected well

in time," another resident said.

The residents demanded that authorities immediately undertake a fresh verification exercise, rectify mistakes and ensure that deserving families are not deprived of housing assistance due to administrative lapses.

Responding to the concerns, Director Rural Development Department (RDD) Kashmir, Reyaz Ahmad Wani, said the matter would be examined and corrective action taken wherever required.

"We will look into the complaints. If any wrong entry has been made, there is a provision to delete it after verification," Wani said.

He explained that beneficiaries approved under the scheme are required to submit geo-tagged photographs at various stages of house construction, making it difficult for ineligible persons to receive benefits without scrutiny.

"Even after sanction, every beneficiary has to provide geo-tagged photographs at different levels. If somebody already has a house and has been wrongly included, the matter can be verified and appropriate action taken. Likewise, if any deserving family has been left out, we will make every effort to include them as per the guidelines," he said.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Zojila Tunnel

ensuring year-round access to remote border areas.

WORLD-CLASS INFRASTRUCTURE

Gadkari stated that the tunnel will be equipped with modern ventilation systems, automatic fire detection systems, advanced CCTV surveillance and cross-passage facilities for pedestrians to ensure safe and efficient travel. "To address snow loads and geological challenges, the project includes eight cut-and-cover sections, four bridges, 40 culverts, snow galleries, catch dams, avalanche protection structures, approach roads and state-of-the-art safety arrangements," he said.

WILL SERVE AS GATEWAY TO DEVELOPMENT

Gadkari said that the Zojila Tunnel is much more than a transportation project and will serve as a gateway to development for the region.

"Upon completion, travel time between Sonamarg and Minamarg will be reduced from nearly two hours to about 30 minutes, resulting in significant savings in time and fuel. The project will also reduce accident risks and disruptions caused by avalanches and adverse weather conditions," he said, adding, "The tunnel is expected to boost tourism, facilitate trade, improve access to remote areas and strengthen connectivity to border regions. From a national security perspective, year-round connectivity will enable faster and more efficient movement of the Indian Army, equipment, supplies and logistics, thereby strengthening strategic preparedness."

"The project will also generate employment opportunities, promote economic growth and improve the quality of life of local communities through enhanced connectivity and regional integration," Gadkari said.

MAJOR CONNECTIVITY PROJECTS STRENGTHENING LADAKH

The Minister stated that road and tunnel projects worth about 18,000 crore are under implementation between Kargil and Leh-Ladakh.

Among the important initiatives is the Kargil-Zanskar-Padum highway project, which is improving access to the Zanskar region while strengthening strategic connectivity and facilitating Army movement.

To improve traffic management in Leh, South and North Bypass projects are being developed to provide seamless movement for vehicles travelling towards Srinagar, Manali and Khardung La without entering the city.

Shri Gadkari also highlighted the proposed Fatu-La Twin-Tube Tunnel and Kela Pass Tunnel, which will improve all-weather connectivity and enhance access to key tourism destinations, including Pangong Lake.

The Minister informed that tunnel projects are being planned at Baralacha La, Lachulung La and Tanglang La along the Manali-Leh route.

These projects will substantially improve travel reliability, reduce journey time and strengthen year-round connectivity to Ladakh.

HIGHWAY DEVELOPMENT WORTH 1.35 LAKH CRORE UNDERWAY IN J&K

Following the breakthrough, Gadkari highlighted the Government's broader efforts to transform road infrastructure across Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

He informed that highway projects worth approximately 1.35 lakh crore, comprising completed, ongoing and upcoming works, are being implemented across Jammu & Kashmir to strengthen connectivity, improve logistics efficiency and accelerate socio-economic development.

Gadkari said that four major high-speed corridors are under development to strengthen connectivity across Jammu & Kashmir.

The Jammu-Udhampur-Srinagar corridor is nearing completion and will significantly reduce travel time through upgraded highway infrastructure and tunnel networks.

The Jammu-Chenani-Anantnag corridor will improve connectivity between the Chenab Valley districts and Kashmir Valley, while the Srinagar-Baramulla-Uri corridor will strengthen connectivity in North Kashmir and facilitate smoother movement of people and goods.

The Jammu-Akhnoor-Poonch corridor is also progressing rapidly and is expected to improve connectivity in border districts while providing substantial travel-time savings.

STRATEGIC AND BORDER CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVES

The Union Minister highlighted several upcoming projects of strategic importance, including the Katra-Srinagar High-Speed Corridor, the Rafiabad-Kupwara-Chowkibal-Tangdhar road project and the Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri corridor.

"These projects will improve access to border areas, facilitate tourism, support horticulture activities and strengthen strategic infrastructure. A new corridor connecting Surankote, Buzilaz, Supen, Doodhpathri and Magam is

also under planning to enhance connectivity between the Pir Panjal region and Kashmir Valley," he added.

RING ROADS TO IMPROVE URBAN MOBILITY

Gadkari stated that the Srinagar Ring Road project is being implemented in multiple phases to decongest the city and facilitate seamless movement towards Baramulla, Kupwara, Bandipora, Gurez, Kargil and Leh. Connectivity to Srinagar Airport and the railway station is also being strengthened through dedicated spur links.

Similarly, the Jammu Ring Road project is being developed to reduce urban congestion and improve traffic circulation around the city. The proposed eastern section will further strengthen regional connectivity and provide a shorter route towards Katra.

DELHI-AMRITSAR-KATRA EXPRESSWAY TO STRENGTHEN REGIONAL LINKAGES

The Minister said that the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Greenfield Expressway will provide faster and more efficient connectivity between Delhi and Katra while strengthening economic linkages across northern India and improving access to Jammu & Kashmir through a modern access-controlled corridor.

TUNNEL INFRASTRUCTURE DRIVING CONNECTIVITY REVOLUTION

Highlighting the Government's focus on tunnel infrastructure in the Himalayan region, Shri Gadkari said that tunnel construction has become a key component of highway development to ensure all-weather connectivity, improve road safety and enhance strategic mobility.

He emphasized that these infrastructure initiatives are not merely transportation projects but instruments of economic growth, tourism development, employment generation, regional integration and national security.

Gadkari said that the successful breakthrough of the Zojila Tunnel symbolizes the emergence of a New India that transforms geographical challenges into opportunities for development, prosperity and national progress. (KNO)

Zojila Tunnel will

a gathering at the Zojila Eastern Portal, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), congratulated the people of J&K and Ladakh and praised engineers, scientists and workers involved in the project for working in challenging conditions.

The Lieutenant Governor expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari for making this vision a reality and said that the landmark project will usher in a new era of connectivity and development for Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh.

"Today is undoubtedly a historic day. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the people of Union Territories of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh," he said, adding, "Under the leadership of PM Modi and the relentless efforts of the Union Minister the Zojila Tunnel will emerge as a lifeline for the region, strengthening supply chains, boosting tourism and providing vital strategic support to our Armed Forces," the Lieutenant Governor said.

LG Sinha along with the Union Minister inspected the tunnel and expressed his deepest appreciation and commendation to all the engineers, personnel and workforce who have worked day and night under extremely challenging weather conditions at such a high altitude.

"Connectivity drives development and brings economic prosperity. Over the last 12 years, unprecedented work has been done in this sector across the country. There has been a significant improvement with regard to road, air and rail connectivity in these regions.

Given the scale of ongoing projects in Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh, I am confident that this will not only boost trade and tourism but will also significantly strengthen national security, especially in border areas.

"I hope this project will be completed at the earliest and dedicated to the people of Ladakh and Jammu Kashmir," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also stated that the completion of this infrastructural marvel will offer immense convenience to devotees of Baba Amarnath Ji coming to Jammu Kashmir from across the country.

As the Chairman of Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board, I once again extend my gratitude and congratulations for this achievement," he said.

"I congratulate the people of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir and all those associated with this project who worked tirelessly in adverse weather conditions," he said.

Highlighting the importance of connectivity in border areas, LG Sinha said improved road, air and rail networks over the past decade have played a key role in driving development.

He noted that previously neglected regions

have now seen sustained infrastructure focus.

Referring to the forthcoming Amarnath Yatra beginning July 3, LG Sinha said improved connectivity would provide significant relief to pilgrims travelling to the shrine.

Pertinently, Zojila Tunnel is a landmark engineering achievement being constructed between Baltal and Minamarg on National Highway-1, the nearly 14-km-long bi-directional Zojila Tunnel is one of India's most ambitious mountain infrastructure projects, being developed at a cost of approximately 6,800 crore. Built at altitudes ranging from 2,900 metres to 3,310 metres, the project represents a significant engineering accomplishment in one of the world's most challenging terrains.

Despite heavy snowfall, harsh weather conditions and complex geological challenges, the project has progressed steadily through the efforts of engineers, workers, consultants, contractors, the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) and other stakeholders.

It is Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel and is scripting a new future of year-round connectivity between the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh. This engineering marvel will significantly reduce travel time, ensure safer travel and provide substantial fuel savings—(KNO)

Zojila Tunnel will improve

the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), congratulated the people of Ladakh and thanked Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari and his team for advancing the project to a stage where all-weather connectivity is now within reach.

He said the closure of the Zojila axis during winters causes hardship, and the tunnel would transform lives by improving access to education, healthcare, tourism, trade and commerce. "The true impact of this tunnel will be reflected in the lives of local residents—students, patients and traders. This project will bring change that is difficult to fully measure today," Omar said.

Expressing hope for early completion of the remaining work, the Chief Minister said the breakthrough marks the fulfilment of a key aspiration of the region.

However, he flagged another long-pending demand of Kargil residents, urging Gadkari to facilitate regular air connectivity to the region.

"We made serious efforts but could not succeed. I request Gadkari Sahib to help realise this demand of the people of Kargil," he said, adding that improved air connectivity would further boost development and integration.

He congratulated the people of Drass and appreciating the efforts of all stakeholders involved in the project.

It's in place to mention here that with this development, the project moves closer to completion of what will be one of the most critical all-weather road links between Kashmir and Ladakh. Once operational, the tunnel is expected to reduce travel time across Zojila Pass from 1-1.5 hours to just about 15 minutes, significantly improving year-round mobility.

The tunnel is a geographically vital infrastructure project measuring 13,153 km in length, 9.5 metres in width, and 7.57 metres in height, built at an altitude of around 11,578 feet above sea level. It is a horseshoe-shaped, single-tube, two-lane road tunnel designed to ensure uninterrupted connectivity even in extreme weather conditions.

The project is being executed by the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited.

Also present on the occasion were Chief Executive Councillor of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Kargil Dr Mohd Jaffer Akhoun, Member of Parliament Ladakh Haji Mohd Haneef Jan, along with senior civil, military and project officials. (KNO)

Meet the Iranian

strategically significant Zojila Tunnel, sees it as more than a feat of engineering in the Himalayas.

Speaking with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) at the breakthrough ceremony, the Iranian engineer said he sees the development a bridge between two homes, and a future where Kashmir and Ladakh remain connected through every season.

Expressing pride over the successful breakthrough of the country's longest road tunnel, he described India as his "second home".

Yusuf, who serves as the Authority Engineer for the Zojila Project representing Intercontinental Consultants and Technocrats (ICT), an Aryaa International Alliance Pvt Ltd (AIAPL) Joint Venture, said the achievement marks a major milestone in one of India's most ambitious infrastructure projects.

"I'm from Iran, and I'm proud of it. At the same time, India has become my second home. I'm happy to be part of this historic project," he said.

According to Yusuf, nearly 80 percent of the tunnel construction work has been completed, while the remaining work is expected to take another two to two-and-a-half years before the tunnel is fully operational.

He said the breakthrough represents a significant engineering achievement and reflects the collective efforts of all agencies involved in executing the project under challenging geographical and climatic conditions.

"We are pleased that the project has progressed successfully," he said.

Yusuf said that though the tunnel is not yet ready for regular public use, it could potentially be utilised in emergency situations if required.

The Zojila Tunnel is a landmark infrastructure project being constructed beneath the Zojila Pass on the Srinagar-Leh National Highway.

Stretching about 14 km between Baltal in Kashmir and Minamarg in Ladakh, it is designed to provide all-weather connectivity to the Union Territory of Ladakh, which often remains cut off during winter due to heavy snowfall and avalanches.

Once operational, the tunnel is expected to reduce travel time across the pass from more than three hours to around 15 to 20 minutes, improving civilian movement, trade, tourism and strategic connectivity.

The project is also expected to strengthen year-round access to remote border areas while boosting economic activity across the wider Himalayan region.

The breakthrough achieved on Tuesday marks the completion of the tunnel's excavation phase, a major engineering milestone in one of India's most challenging high-altitude infrastructure projects. (KNO)

'57-km Sgr-Sonamarg

News Observer (KNO), said the Detailed Project Report (DPR) will be finalised by July, following which construction work will commence.

He said the upgrade is expected to significantly cut travel time on the route—from around two-and-a-half hours to about 45 minutes—and improve connectivity to Sonamarg and Ladakh.

The project, he added, is part of the government's broader push to strengthen road infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir and ensure all-weather connectivity to the strategically important Ladakh region. (KNO)

J&K mandates mother

implementation of FLN goals across the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, there shall be use of home language, mother tongue as the primary medium in early years, with gradual bridging to additional languages."

These measures are to be implemented in all government and government-aided schools and Anganwadi centres.

The government also said that all Schools and Anganwadi Centres shall ensure the development of early language and literacy through structured opportunities for listening and speaking, including storytelling, rhymes, poems, and guided discussions.

It also said that there shall be a creation and effective utilization of print-rich classroom environments like labelled objects, charts, word walls, and children's work.

The government further said that the schools and Anganwadi centres shall adopt a play-based literacy approaches, rote alphabet drills without context shall be discouraged.

"There shall be daily engagement in phonological awareness activities such as rhyming, syllable segmentation, blending, and sound identification," reads the circular.

It also said that the schools shall ensure developmentally appropriate writing progression from drawing and scribbling to meaningful words and short sentences.

"There shall be a continuous and observation-based formative assessment; formal written examinations at preschool level are strictly prohibited," it reads.

It also asked the schools to ensure that by the end of Grade-II, every child reads age-appropriate text with fluency, demonstrates comprehension, and retells stories sequentially.

About the strengthening of Foundational Numeracy Competencies, Mathematics instruction at the Foundational Stage shall emphasize conceptual understanding through experiential and activity-based learning, including pre-number and logical thinking activities like sorting, matching, classification, comparison, seriation, and one-to-one correspondence.

The government also said that schools shall have the development of number sense through meaningful counting, numeral-quantity association, cardinality, and understanding of zero.

SCERT-J&K in a circular also said that the schools shall introduce addition and subtraction using concrete materials and real-life

contexts.

Regarding the adoption of appropriate pedagogical practices, the government said that the instruction at the Foundational Stage shall be child-centric, competency-based, and activity-oriented and based on the Concrete Pictorial-Abstract (CPA) approach.

The government further said that the Heads of Institutions, in coordination with Zonal Education Officers and concerned teachers, shall be responsible for ensuring that all learners attain the prescribed foundational literacy and numeracy competencies within the stipulated timeframe. (KNO)

Kashmir parts witness

Meteorological Department (IMD), temperatures across several parts of north India are likely to remain above normal until June 11, with daytime temperatures expected to rise by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius before gradually declining in the following days.

The IMD has issued heatwave alerts for isolated areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, western Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, with warnings remaining in force through Wednesday in most places.

Meteorologists, however, said relief is likely as a fresh Western Disturbance is expected to affect the Western Himalayan region beginning June 11.

Director of the Meteorological Centre Srinagar, Mukhtar Ahmad, told KNO that weather conditions are expected to remain largely hot and dry across Jammu and Kashmir till June 10, although brief afternoon showers at isolated places cannot be ruled out.

He said that from June 11 to June 14, the Union Territory is likely to witness partly to generally cloudy weather, with light rain, brief intense showers, thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds at scattered to many places.

"Thunderstorms, lightning, hailstorms and gusty winds with speeds of 40 to 50 kilometres per hour, gusting up to 60 kilometres per hour, accompanied by brief intense showers, are expected at isolated to scattered locations during the period," Ahmad said.

The IMD has also forecast isolated to scattered rainfall across Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand between June 9 and June 14. Rainfall activity is expected to extend to Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan from June 10 onwards.

Weather officials warned that intense rainfall at some places in the Kashmir and Jammu divisions could trigger flash floods, mudslides and localised flooding in vulnerable areas between June 11 and June 14.

Authorities have advised residents, farmers and travellers to remain alert and follow official weather advisories, particularly in areas prone to landslides, flash floods and thunderstorm-related incidents.

The expected rainfall and drop in temperatures are likely to bring relief from the ongoing heatwave, though officials cautioned that severe weather conditions could pose risks in some areas. (KNO)

J&K sees 42%

also reported below-normal rainfall. Poonch was the only district to register a substantial surplus, receiving 122.8 mm rainfall against a normal of 82.3 mm, an excess of 49 per cent.

In Ladakh, Kargil recorded a 38 per cent deficit while Leh registered a 40 per cent surplus. Overall, the region ended May with a seven per cent precipitation deficit.

Kashmir Weather said the growing precipitation deficit was becoming increasingly significant as the region entered the warmer months.

The forecaster noted that several consecutive winters have witnessed below-normal precipitation, leading to reduced snow accumulation in higher reaches. Lower snowfall affects seasonal snow reserves and glacier nourishment, both of which play a key role in sustaining river flows during summer.

It warned that rising temperatures were accelerating snow and glacier melt in mountain regions. While enhanced melting may temporarily maintain river discharge, reduced snowfall coupled with warming temperatures could gradually affect glacier mass and long-term water security.

The forecaster said prolonged dry conditions later in the year could result in lower river and stream flows, affecting irrigation, agriculture, horticulture, hydropower generation, drinking water supplies and groundwater recharge.

It stressed the need for improved water-resource management, conservation measures and long-term planning to address the impact of changing precipitation patterns and emerging water-stress challenges across Jammu and Kashmir. (KNO)

PM Modi speaks to Amir of Kuwait, discusses West Asia situation

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 9: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday had a telephonic conversation with Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah, and exchanged views on the evolving security situation in West Asia and stressed for de-escalation and diplomacy for earliest restoration of peace in the region.

Modi also expressed deep concern over the escalation of tensions in West Asia and reaffirmed India's strong condemnation of attacks on Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephone conversation today with the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah. The two leaders exchanged views on the evolving



security situation in West Asia. Prime Minister reiterated the call for de-escalation, dialogue and diplomacy for earliest restoration of peace and stability," the statement said.

Modi thanked the Amir for his personal attention to the continued well-being and the safety of the large Indian community in Kuwait. The development

comes days after an Indian national was killed in an Iranian strike on the Kuwait International Airport on June 3. The attack came amid escalating tensions between Israel and Iran.

Earlier, an Indian national was killed in Kuwait in Iranian strikes on a power and water desalination plant on March 30.

Shah hails welfare, infra achievements under Modi as govt completes 12 years

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 9: As the Narendra Modi government completed 12 years on Tuesday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah hailed the prime minister's leadership, saying the country has witnessed the simultaneous realization of welfare for the poor and unprecedented development.

In a post on X, he said Modi had served the nation and its citizens tirelessly and highlighted a range of welfare and infrastructure initiatives undertaken during his tenure. "Under Modi ji's leadership, over these 12 years, the country has witnessed for the first time the parallel realization of poor welfare and unprecedented development," Shah said.

The home minister cited measures such as free ration for 80 crore people, pucca houses for more than four crore poor families, health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh for 50 crore people and LPG connections for over 10 crore households.

He also referred to the launch of more than 90 airports and over 140 Vande Bharat trains, besides the construction of 1.45 lakh km of roads and 3,000 km of



modern expressways.

Referring to India's economic growth, Shah said the country had become the world's fastest-growing major economy under Modi's leadership.

"Modi ji has served the nation and its citizens tirelessly through these 12 years without taking even a single day off," he said.

Shah said such transformation was possible only when leadership's intent was pure, goals were in the national interest and dedication was complete.

Modi was sworn-in as prime minister for the third consecutive time on June 9, 2024, following another decisive victory in the 2024 Parliamentary elections.

He took oath as prime minister for the first time on May 26, 2014. His second term began on May 30, 2019.

Gold regains Rs 1.6 lakh/10g level as weak US dollar lifts sentiment

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 9: Gold prices rebounded by Rs 1,500 to reclaim the Rs 1.60 lakh per 10-gram mark in the national capital on Tuesday due to a weak US dollar and improving sentiment in the bullion market.

According to local marketmen, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity climbed Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,60,300 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Monday's closing level of Rs 1,58,800 per 10 grams.

The recovery came even as global gold prices traded lower, with analysts attributing the rise in domestic prices weak to US dollar and renewed investor interest.

"Gold prices rebounded on Tuesday, supported by a decline in crude oil prices and a pullback in the US dollar and Treasury bond yields," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities, HDFC Securities, said.

Silver prices, however, remained flat at Rs 2,55,700 per kilogram.

Market sentiment improved after Iran and Israel agreed to halt attacks against each other, while comments from US President Donald Trump indicating progress toward a formal ceasefire boosted hopes for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict, he added.

CJI Surya Kant bats for mediation, says arbitration facing procedural hurdles

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 9: Observing that international arbitration is increasingly facing procedural hurdles, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said mediation is no longer an alternative but an essential instrument to achieve timely, amicable and lasting resolution of disputes.

He was delivering a lecture on "Mediation, Arbitration and the Courts: Converging Trends in the Indian and English Approaches in Commercial Dispute Resolution" at the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom on Monday.

Calling for a fundamental shift in how global corporations and legal systems approach conflict, the CJI said, "The primary question for a modern corporation should no longer be where to litigate, but rather how to resolve."

He said courts, arbitration

and mediation should not be viewed as competing mechanisms but as complementary institutions serving distinct functions within a broader justice ecosystem.

"We must reject the archaic narrative that pits alternative dispute resolution against the majesty of formal courts," he said.

"Traditional courts must continue to remain the ultimate guardians of public legal standard-setting and constitutional accountability. Yet, where the court provides the architecture of certainty, mediation serves as the adaptive mechanism for private commercial harmony. The two systems do not diminish one another; they sustain each other," he said.

At the outset, the CJI dealt with arbitration, especially international arbitration, as one of the important alternative dispute resolution



mechanisms and referred to the difficulties being faced across jurisdictions in getting disputes resolved through this.

"It is my earnest belief that as international arbitration has increasingly mirrored the very procedural complexities it was designed to escape, it is mediation that now emerges as the authentic frontier of commercial agility," he said.

"Over the last several

decades, arbitration has indubitably come to be viewed across jurisdictions as a response to some of the perceived limitations of court-centric adjudication, particularly in matters involving speed, technical complexity, party autonomy, and cross-border commerce," he said.

Kant said that in India, the Arbitration and Conciliation

Act came into being in 1996 and various judicial interpretations also advanced "a pro-arbitration approach", keeping in harmony with internationally accepted principles governing commercial dispute resolution.

Indian courts have repeatedly reaffirmed the principle of minimal judicial intervention for preserving the sanctity of arbitral proceedings, he said.

"However, in spite of its virtues, arbitration seems to be on the verge of inheriting some of the very procedural burdens from which it originally sought to depart. At least within the Indian justice delivery system, arbitral proceedings have generated an expanding parallel layer of litigation, where nearly every stage of the arbitral process becomes susceptible to judicial challenge between contesting parties," he said.

Birsa Munda's ideals guiding light for inclusive dev: VP

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 9: Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Tuesday paid tributes to tribal icon Birsa Munda on his death anniversary, saying his ideals are a guiding light for social justice and inclusive development.

On this day in 1900, the iconic tribal freedom fighter attained martyrdom. He spearheaded the historic late 19th-century tribal uprising, "Ulgulan" (The Great Tumult) against the British colonial rule.

In a social media post, the vice president said Munda's life symbolised courage, self-respect and an unwavering commitment to justice.

"Through the historic Ulgulan, he awakened



the spirit of resistance against oppression and inspired tribal communities to safeguard their rights, identity and dignity," he said.

Radhakrishnan recalled that he had the opportunity to pay respects at his birthplace, Ulihatu, on the very first day of assuming office as governor of Jharkhand and

again recently as the vice president.

"Bhagwan Birsa Munda's sacrifice and ideals continue to guide the nation in its pursuit of social justice, empowerment and inclusive development. His legacy will remain a lasting source of inspiration for generations to come," he added.

Market snaps two-day losing streak

Sensex gains 400 pts on strong global cues

PTI

Mumbai, Jun 9: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty found firmer ground on Tuesday after sliding for the past two sessions, propelled by intense buying in banking and financial stocks amid a recovery in global markets and easing crude prices.

Signs of easing tensions in West Asia added to markets' optimism, but unrelenting foreign fund outflows capped the gains, traders said. In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 394.50 points, or 0.54 per cent, to settle at 73,918.76. During the day, it jumped 511.15 points, or 0.69 per cent, to 74,035.41.

A total of 2,782 stocks advanced, while 1,423 declined and 193 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty ended 119.10 points, or 0.52 per cent, higher at 23,242.10. Intra-day, the benchmark index climbed 156.4 points, or 0.67 per cent, to 23,279.40.

"Indian equity markets ended higher as easing tensions between Israel and Iran helped improve investor sentiment and drive a recovery in risk assets.

"Global markets also traded firmly in positive territory, supported by a combination of easing geopolitical risks, softer oil prices and renewed optimism surrounding the technology and AI sectors," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

'Forged signature' probe CID enters Mamata's Kalighat residence-cum-party office

PTI

Kolkata, Jun 9: A CID team on Tuesday entered Trinamool Congress's central party office-cum-residence of party supremo Mamata Banerjee in Kalighat area here, after a brief standoff with security personnel and a party leader, as a part of its probe into the controversy surrounding alleged forged signatures of TMC MLAs, which has triggered a split in the party.

Officials of the state investigating agency, accompanied by personnel from the Kalighat police station and a large contingent of women police personnel, arrived at the party's central office at 30B Harish Chatterjee Street around late afternoon, sources said.

The CID's move comes days after the agency served notices seeking information related to the alleged forging of signatures of TMC legislators on a proposal submitted to the Assembly Speaker for recognition of the Leader of Opposition.

According to CID officials present at the spot, the search was sought on the basis of a reply submitted by TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee to an earlier notice



issued by the agency.

"In his response, Abhishek Banerjee stated that signatures of MLAs were collected at the party's central office at 30B Harish Chatterjee Street. Based on that statement, we have come here as part of the investigation," a CID officer said.

Abhishek Banerjee, who is presently in New Delhi along with Mamata Banerjee, has been summoned by the CID to appear before it in the case by 5 pm on Tuesday.

Initially, the investigating team was prevented from entering the premises, leading to a brief standoff with security personnel posted at the complex.

TMC leader and former MP Subhasish Chakraborty had earlier said the party would not permit a search in the absence of Abhishek Banerjee.

"We have not allowed the CID to enter the

premises in the absence of Abhishek Banerjee. Once he comes, the CID can come and search the house," Chakraborty told reporters.

However, the situation changed later in the afternoon when the CID called in a larger police contingent and entered the premises despite what officials described as "mild resistance" from security personnel stationed there.

Senior officers from the Kalighat police station rushed to the spot and were seen arguing with the security staff, who are attached to the Kolkata Police.

The officers reportedly instructed them not to obstruct the search operation being carried out by the investigating agency.

Sources said the CID team subsequently entered the residence-cum-office complex and began its search and verification exercise.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir UT
DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR HANDWARA
ASSISTANT COLLECTOR/ EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS

Subject: Extension of Auction Notice for timber logs (37 Logs) and firewood (125 Quintals) of felled Walnut Trees from construction/ improvement of newly declared NH-701 Rafiabad-Kupwara-Chowkibal-Tangdar-Chamkote (RKCTC) Road and deposited at Revenue Administrative Complex Handwara.

EXTENSION NOTICE

In continuation to this office Auction Notice issued vide no. TH/Gen/Per/26/1113-1124, dated 26-05-2026, regarding auction of 37 timber logs measuring 215 Cfts. and 125 Quintals of walnut firewood lying at the office premises of Revenue Administrative Complex Handwara, it is hereby notified for the information of the general public and registered wood carvers/authorized walnut wood dealers that, owing to administrative reasons and to facilitate wider participation, the auction date has been extended by Ten (10) days.

Accordingly, the auction which was scheduled to be held on 09-06-2026 at 12:00 Noon shall now be conducted on 18-06-2026 (Thursday) at 12:00 Noon in the office chamber of the Tehsildar Handwara under the supervision of the duly constituted Auction Committee. The minimum reserve bid value for auction is 200000/- (Rupees Two Lakh only).

The details of timber logs/firewood notified under the original auction notice shall remain unchanged:

S.no	Species	Dia-Class	No. of Logs/Weight	Location of Trees
01	Walnut	Variable	37 Logs 215 cft	On the Bank of NH-701
02	Walnut firewood	Variable	125 Quintals	(RKCTC) Road in Tehsil Handwara

Terms and Conditions:
Bid Valuation: The reserve bid amount has been determined by the Technical Committee in accordance with rules Governing the subject after proper spot verification as per Govt order No: 10-FST of 2018, dated: 09-01-2018.
Mandatory Presence & Identification: Bidders must attend in person and carry valid photo identification (Aadhaar/Voter ID/ Driving License etc).
Security Deposit: A refundable security deposit of Rs=10,000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand only) in the form of CDR/ Demand Draft pledged to "Tehsildar Handwara" must be submitted on 16th June and only those who submit the security deposit on 16th of June 2026 shall be eligible to participate for auction to be held on 18th of June 2026. Furthermore, the security deposit will.
Be non-refundable if the bidder pledges amount to "Tehsildar Handwara" but does not participate in the event, or if the bidder bids an amount less than the prescribed minimum bid value.
Payment Terms: The successful bidder shall deposit the full bid amount in one instalment immediately upon conclusion of the auction, along with a duly notarized undertaking to comply with all statutory procedures, including felling, transportation, and utilization norms.
Right to Reject: The Auction Committee reserves the absolute right to accept or reject any bid without assigning reasons, especially in case of non-compliance with procedural or legal formalities.
Pre-Auction Inspection: Interested bidders may inspect the felled timber logs/ firewood from 12-06-2026 to 16-06-2026 (10:30 AM to 04:00 PM) on any working day. Contact Person: Raief Riyaz of Tehsil Office Handwara Mobile: +91- 7006398647 (He shall accompany bidders for identification and verification of trees)

Tehsildar Handwara Assistant Collector 1st Class

No.: TH/Gen/Per/26/1151- 1163
Dated: 09/06/2026

DIPK-1979/26 Dated: 09-06-2026

UN inquiry: Palestinians 'trapped' between Israeli forces, settlers and Hamas

AFP

Geneva, Jun 9: Palestinian civilians are caught between "mass atrocities" of Israeli forces, settlers and Hamas's brutal rule, a UN-mandated inquiry said Tuesday.

Civilians across war-ravaged Gaza and the occupied West Bank are being "systematically and deliberately" subjected to severe rights violations, the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry said.

The investigative team, which last year concluded that Israel had committed "genocide" in the war in Gaza, highlighted in a new report that civilians in the territory were also being "violently repressed and controlled by the very faction that claims to govern them."

In the Gaza Strip, "ordinary Palestinians find themselves trapped between the structural violence and mass atrocities of Israeli forces and the predatory, fear-based rule of Hamas," the report said.

And in the West Bank, which has seen soaring violence since Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel triggered the Gaza war, it described how Palestinian civilians were increasingly targeted by Israeli settler attacks.

"Violence by settlers is the direct outcome of Israeli policies that support, enable and protect their actions," commission chair Srinivasan Muralidhar said in a statement.



Hamas-affiliated forces, he added, had meanwhile "exploited the vacuum created by relentless Israeli attacks and widespread destruction of Gaza."

"Deliberate infliction of suffering"

"What is alarmingly similar is the deliberate infliction of suffering on Palestinian civilians. While their origins and motivations differ, both operate within environments engineered by Israel," said Muralidhar, an Indian judge.

The three-person commission was established by the UN Human Rights Council in May 2021 to investigate alleged rights violations in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Tuesday's report focused heavily on the situation in the

West Bank, which has been occupied by Israel since 1967.

In the territory, Israeli soldiers or settlers have killed at least 1,080 Palestinians since October 2023, according to an AFP tally based on Palestinian health ministry data.

Official Israeli figures show that at least 46 Israelis, both civilians and soldiers, have been killed in Palestinian attacks or during Israeli military operations in the same period.

The inquiry found that at least 26 Palestinians were killed and at least 1,570 were injured by settlers between January 2023 and December 2025.

"This trend continues in 2026 with attacks carried out on a daily basis," the

investigators said.

End settler activity

The report, which will be presented to the rights council on Monday, concluded that Israel was responsible for enabling the settlers' action.

Settler violence "functions as a means of implementing Israeli state policy," it charged, with both focused on "entrenchment of Israeli settlements, annexation of Palestinian territory and displacement of Palestinians from their land."

The report called on Israel, which has long accused the commission of "systematic anti-Israel discrimination," to stop the violence.

Israel, it said, must "immediately end the unlawful occupation of Palestinian

territory," stop all new settlement activities and remove all settlers and settlements.

Executions and torture
The commission also determined that Hamas-affiliated forces were responsible for serious rights abuses, including the "war crimes of murder and torture" in Gaza.

It identified 249 cases of executions and severe physical violence in 2024-2025, resulting in at least 108 deaths and 384 people injured.

The commission found that Hamas-affiliated forces were involved in at least 60 such incidents.

The investigators found among other things that Hamas members had "tortured Palestinian civilians in the Nasser Medical Complex" in Gaza.

It stressed though that such conduct "does not result in the loss of special protection of the hospital against attacks under international humanitarian law."

The commission recommended "that the de facto authorities in Gaza immediately stop all extrajudicial punishments of civilians, including executions, torture, and mental, physical and sexual violence."

They should also "refrain from using civilian objects, including hospitals, for any purpose incompatible with their humanitarian and civilian functions," it added.

Israel slams 'disgraceful measures' from 6 foreign govts against West Bank settler entities



AFP

London, Jun 09: Israel's foreign ministry on Tuesday denounced a series of sanctions from six Western countries against settler entities in the occupied West Bank for their role in increased settlement building and violence against Palestinians.

"Israel firmly rejects the disgraceful measures adopted by foreign governments against Israeli citizens, entities, and a government minister," ministry spokesman Oren Marmorstein said in a statement.

"The real essence of these steps is the attempt to impose a political stance regarding the right of Jews to settle in the Land of Israel and concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - camouflaged as measures against violence," he added.

Britain on Tuesday announced a package of sanctions targeting what the government said were networks involved in financing, enabling and carrying out settler violence in the occupied West Bank.

The sanctions, which were coordinated with Canada, France and Norway, are aimed at disrupting the flows of finance that have "allowed extremist settler groups to act with impunity" in the West Bank, a British government statement said.

"Settler expansion and violence is illegal and a fundamental threat to the viability of a two-state solution, and to long-term peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis," British foreign minister Yvette Cooper is expected to say in parliament later,

according to advance excerpts of her remarks.

The government said continued illegal settlement expansion undermined the viability of a two-state solution, with record levels of settler violence "designed deliberately to destroy Palestinian homes and livelihoods in the West Bank."

Britain also repeated its call on the Israeli government to end settlement expansion, clamp down on settler violence, prosecute those responsible, and lift ongoing restrictions on the functioning of the Palestinian economy.

The government also threatened further action if the situation does not improve.

Israel rejects charges that its troops shield settlers during attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank, saying such actions are rogue incidents that violate military protocol and are investigated.

The British sanctions follow a UN inquiry which has found that Israeli authorities were directly involved in settler attacks that have killed, injured and displaced Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, while Israeli security forces provided protection to settlers. Under Prime Minister Keir Starmer, London has paused free trade talks with Israel, suspended some arms export licenses and imposed sanctions on two far-right Israeli cabinet ministers, Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich.

Last year Britain joined allies including France and Canada in recognizing a Palestinian state.

Hurting country very badly: Trump on court order scrapping H-1B visa fee

PTI

Washington, Jun 9: US President Donald Trump on Tuesday criticised the federal court order striking down the USD 100,000 H-1B visa fee, saying such actions were hurting the country very badly.

"These judges are really giving us a hard time, really crazy. They are giving us a very, very hard time... they're hurting our country very badly," Trump told reporters in New York after watching the NBA Finals at Madison Square Garden.

A federal judge in



Massachusetts on Monday struck down the Trump administration's USD 100,000 fee on H-1B visas for highly skilled workers, which California and

19 other states had challenged.

Federal judge Leo Sorokin ruled that the USD 100,000 fee imposed by Trump for H-1B applications was unlawful because it lacked Congressional approval. In September last year, Trump signed a proclamation adding the USD 100,000 fee for new H-1B visa applications.

A White House spokesperson indicated that the order will be challenged in an appellate court. "The H-1B programme has been abused for decades, and President Trump finally took action to fix it," White House spokesperson Taylor Rogers said.

Hayden joins Glasgow franchise of ETPL as co-owner and coach

PTI

Glasgow, Jun 9: Former Australian opener Matthew Hayden on Tuesday joined Glasgow Cosmic as co-owner and head coach ahead of the inaugural European T20 Premier League (ETPL) season. Hayden was batting coach of Gujarat Titans in the recently-concluded IPL.

"Cricket has given me a lifetime of opportunities - as a player, teammate, mentor, broadcaster and coach - and the chance to help build a new franchise from the ground up is a challenge that excites me enormously," Hayden said in a statement.

"What attracted me most to the Glasgow Cosmetics project was not simply the cricket opportunity, but the vision behind it. Great teams are built on strong values, clear purpose and people who are prepared to think boldly," he added.

Lord's, Gaddafi Stadium pitches rated as 'unsatisfactory'



PTI

Dubai, Jun 9: The pitches used for the first Test between England and New Zealand at Lord's in London and the third ODI between Pakistan and Australia at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore have been rated as "unsatisfactory" under the ICC Pitch and Outfield Monitoring Process.

The two venues have been handed one demerit point each after match referees Andy Pycroft (Lord's) and Graeme La Brooy (Gaddafi Stadium) submitted their respective reports, highlighting concerns raised by match officials and captains.

Pycroft said the Lord's pitch offered excessive seam movement throughout the Test and the ball also stayed extremely low on several occasions, resulting in variable bounce.

"There was plenty of excessive seam movement

throughout the Test and the ball also kept extremely low on several occasions. The bounce was variable throughout as 16 wickets fell on the first day and 17 on the second.

"There was simply an over-balance in favour of ball against bat caused by the pitch," Pycroft said about the Lord's pitch.

England defeated New Zealand by 115 runs on Day 4 of the first Test match at Lord's. Set a target of 254 runs to win, the tourists were bowled out for 138 in their second innings, giving England a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

On the Gaddafi Stadium surface, La Brooy said the pitch was slow and low, making it difficult for batters to score runs and unsuitable for a One-Day International.

"It did not suit an ODI game as batters had to

spend more time to settle in. It helped spin very early in the match and continued the same way throughout," La Brooy said.

The reports have been forwarded to the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), who have 14 days to appeal against the sanctions.

Neither Lord's nor Gaddafi Stadium had any previous demerit points.

As per ICC regulations, a venue receives one demerit point if a pitch is rated "unsatisfactory" and three points if it is rated "unfit". The points remain active for a five-year rolling period.

A venue accumulating six demerit points is suspended from hosting international cricket for 12 months, while reaching 12 demerit points results in a 24-month suspension.

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PEDDI (HINDI) (U/A16+)

06:00 PM

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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)

12:00 PM

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