



India emerging as 'trusted partner' to world: PM Modi

PTI

Paris, Jun 18: India is emerging as a "trusted partner" to the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday, underlining that the country is investing across sectors that will drive growth, innovation and opportunity for generations to come.

Addressing the Indian diaspora here, Modi said that this is a defining period in India's journey, where aspirations are reaching new heights.

"There was a time when relations between countries were determined solely by trade, but today, trust has become just as important alongside trade," Modi told the gathering at Salle Pleyel, one of the largest indoor venues in the French capital.

"Every country wants a reliable supply chain. Every country wants a stable partnership. Every country is in search of such partners on whom trust can be placed for the long term, and at such a time, India is emerging as a trusted partner in the world," the prime minister said.

Modi said that at the G7 meeting in Evian, he



emphasised the importance of partnerships based on trust.

"Bharat's message to the G7 Summit was clear: global governance will only be effective when it is inclusive; global growth will be sustainable when it is shared; and technology will truly benefit humanity when it is trusted," he said.

Modi said that the world is experiencing a period of uncertainty and disruption.

"In these challenging times, the partnership between France and India has become a strong pillar of trust, stability, and cooperation," he said, noting that the two sides have elevated their

relationship to the status of a Special Global Strategic Partnership.

He said the two countries are launching the TRISHNA satellite next year. "This satellite will contribute to ensuring water and food security in the world," he added.

Modi said he arrived in France when his government had completed 12 years.

"Serving the nation continuously for 12 years as the elected Prime Minister has been a great fortune of my life. This is the strength of India's democracy, which has brought a tea seller to this position," he said.

Modi said | [More on P6](#)

Mata Kheer Bhawani Mela symbolises Kashmir's age-old harmony, brotherhood: CM

Visits temple, directs seamless facilities for devotees

Raja Syed Rather

Ganderbal, Jun 18: Reaffirming the government's commitment towards preserving the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said that the annual Mata Kheer Bhawani Mela symbolizes the region's age-old traditions of harmony, mutual respect and brotherhood.

The Chief Minister, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), today visited the revered Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple at Tulmulla in Ganderbal district to review the arrangements being put in place for the forthcoming annual Mata Kheer Bhawani Mela.

During the visit, the Chief Minister took spot inspection of various facilities being established for the convenience of devotees and reviewed preparations related



to accommodation, drinking water supply, sanitation, power supply, healthcare services, security, traffic management and other essential arrangements.

Interacting with officers on the spot, the Chief Minister emphasized the significance of the annual mela and directed all departments to work in close

coordination to ensure that devotees are provided a safe, comfortable and spiritually fulfilling experience during their visit to the temple.

He stressed the need for maintaining high standards of cleanliness and hygiene in and around the temple premises and instructed the concerned

departments to ensure uninterrupted availability of basic services throughout the mela period.

The Chief Minister also reviewed arrangements for medical aid, emergency response services and transportation facilities. He directed the concerned agencies to remain fully prepared to promptly address any requirement of pilgrims and ensure smooth movement of devotees.

During the visit, members of the local community and representatives of various organizations interacted with the Chief Minister and expressed satisfaction over the arrangements being made for the annual pilgrimage.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by Advisor to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani; Political Advisor to the Chief Minister, Mudasir Shahmiri; Additional | [More on P6](#)

Lavender cultivation addition of new chapter in J&K's prosperity: Omar

Inaugurates Lavender Festival at Nunar; lays foundation stone of agri infra projects

KT News Desk

Ganderbal, Jun 18: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday inaugurated the Lavender Festival organised by the Agriculture department Kashmir at the Model Floriculture Centre (MFC), Nunar, Ganderbal, and laid the foundation stone and inaugurated several agriculture | [More on P6](#)



Preparedness, training critical for disaster response: DGP

Says mountain rescue teams crucial as cloudbursts, landslides rising

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 18: Asserting that there is no substitute for readiness when dealing with challenging situations, Director General of Police (DGP) J&K, Nalin Prabhat, on Thursday said preparedness and training remain the most critical elements of disaster response.

Addressing personnel from various rescue and security agencies during a joint training programme, the DGP, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Mountain rescue teams play a crucial role in saving lives during emergencies, particularly as weather-related risks continue to increase every year."

"In mountainous areas, the risk of cloudbursts and landslides is rising annually. Mountain Rescue Teams have a very important role to play. Training is a fundamental requirement for any force and any challenging task. There is no substitute for it," DGP Prabhat



said.

Recalling the rescue operation in Gulmarg, the DGP lauded SDRF and MRT personnel for their dedication, professionalism and efficiency, describing their performance as being of "global standards." He also informed the personnel that the accommodation benefits promised to those who participated in the Gulmarg rescue operation have been approved in principle and the process is awaiting final inputs from district police authorities.

The DGP stressed that while individual forces may possess high levels of | [More on P6](#)

Admin steps up Amarnath Yatra preparations, security drills intensified

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 18: The Jammu and Kashmir administration has intensified preparations for annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY) beginning July 3, 2026, with civil administration, security agencies and shrine board officials undertaking a series of measures to ensure smooth conduct of the pilgrimage and effective management of the expected influx of devotees.

Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir Anshul Garg on Thursday said all departments were working in coordination to provide necessary facilities and services to pilgrims along both the Baltal and Pahalgam routes.

"There is a well-established system in place for the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra. Like every year, the pilgrimage will commence on July 3, and all departments are working to provide services in a timely manner," Garg told reporters on the sidelines of an event in Srinagar.

The Div Com, as reported



by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said preparations at the Baltal and Nunwan base camps were being regularly reviewed

and that district administrations were coordinating with service providers to ensure seamless arrangements for pilgrims. | [More on P6](#)

India hopes US-Iran deal will lead to sustained peace in West Asia

PTI

Paris, Jun 18: India on Thursday welcomed the US-Iran peace deal, affirming that New Delhi remains in close touch with partner nations in West Asia and is prepared to contribute in addressing the "next steps" to ensure peace and stability in the region.

At a media briefing, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said India always advocated the path of dialogue and diplomacy to resolve the conflict and it expects that the US-Iran understanding will lead to sustained peace.

Misri said the West Asia situation figured prominently in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's engagements at G7 outreach meetings as well as in his bilateral talks with several world leaders.

PM Modi expressed India's desire to see sustained peace and security in West Asia, he added.

US President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signed the landmark peace Memorandum of

Understanding (MOU) which provides for an immediate halt to all military operations, the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, and the lifting of the US naval blockade on Iranian ports.

Misri said India has been in close touch with most of the protagonists who are involved or affected by the conflict.

"We remain in very close touch with all of those partners, and we'll be ready to do whatever it is, whatever it is possible for us to do, in so far as addressing the next steps," he said.

"India welcomed the developments that have taken place through the understanding that has been reached between the US and Iran and hopes to see a rapid return to peace and stability in the region," Misri said.

The foreign secretary said India always emphasised the importance of maintaining the freedom of navigation and unimpeded commerce through the international waterways in the region.

He said Modi specifically underlined the | [More on P6](#)

Northern Army Commander reviews security along Yatra route

Umair Gull Ganaie

Pahalgam, Jun 18: Northern Army Commander Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma visited Pahalgam and Chandanwari on Thursday to review the security situation and assess operational preparedness along the southern route ahead of the commencement of the Amarnath Yatra 2026.

The Army Commander, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) reviewed security arrangements and preparedness measures put in place for the annual pilgrimage.

In a post on X, Northern Command said, "Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, Army Commander Northern Command, visited Pahalgam and Chandanwari to review the security situation and assess operational preparedness along the | [More on P6](#)

Choose moderation in Wazwan as single *trami* may contain 6,000-9,000 calories: Health advisory

'Excess calories, saturated fats, salt, sugar can lead to obesity, diabetes, fatty liver, heart disease'

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jun 18: While Wazwan remains an integral part of Kashmir's cultural heritage and hospitality, health experts are urging people to enjoy the traditional feast in moderation after an awareness advisory highlighted its significant calorie content and the potential health risks associated with overconsumption.

According to a public health advisory, accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), a typical Wazwan *trami* serving four people may contain between 6,000 and 9,000



calories, depending on the quantity and preparation of dishes. This translates to approximately 1,500 to 2,250 calories per person, which can account for as much as

80 to 125 per cent of an average adult's daily calorie requirement in a single meal.

The advisory, issued by Dr S. Muhammad Salim Khan, notes that the calorie count

primarily comes from large portions of rice, red meat preparations, meatballs such as Rista and Gushtaba, Kebabs, Tabak Maaz, and gravies rich in fats and oils.

Health experts point out that the recommended daily calorie intake for an adult male with moderate physical activity ranges between 2,300 and 2,700 calories, while adult females generally require 1,800 to 2,200 calories. Sedentary adults and elderly individuals require even fewer calories.

The advisory warns that consuming a large share of Wazwan along with soft drinks can easily push daily

calorie consumption beyond recommended limits. A 300 ml cola contains approximately 120 to 140 calories and 30 to 35 grams of sugar, while a 500 ml serving may provide 200 to 240 calories and up to 60 grams of sugar.

"Just one large Wazwan meal accompanied by two soft drinks can add an additional 250 to 500 calories and 60 to 100 grams of sugar to the diet," the advisory states.

Medical experts caution that regularly consuming meals high in calories, saturated fats, salt, and sugar can contribute to several non-communicable diseases.

Among | [More on P6](#)

RAIN, HAILSTORM LASH J&K PARTS

MeT warns of flash floods, mudslides

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 18: Amid a Meteorological Department warning of flash floods and mudslides in vulnerable areas, rain, thunderstorms, gusty winds and hailstorms lashed several parts of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday evening.

An official of the MeT Centre Srinagar told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), many places across Kashmir and parts of Jammu division, including Ramban, Doda, Kishtwar, Rajouri and Poonch districts witnessed a spell of rain and thundershowers. "Weather activity was also reported along the Sonamarg-Baltal-Holy Cave axis ahead of the annual Amarnath Yatra," he added.

The weather office said hailstorms | [More on P6](#)

CS directs rationalisation of departmental cadres, timely conduct of DPCs

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 18: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting of Administrative Secretaries to review the status of updation of Recruitment Rules (RRs) across departments and assess the progress made in holding Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs) for government employees.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary, as per an official statement, undertook a comprehensive department-wise review of the Recruitment Rules pertaining to both Gazetted and Subordinate Services and emphasized the need for their timely revision in line with evolving administrative requirements and technological advancements.

Observing that the nature of governance and service delivery has undergone significant transformation over the years, the Chief Secretary stressed the importance of aligning departmental structures with contemporary needs. He underscored the necessity of identifying posts that have become redundant over time and strengthening those that are critical for efficient functioning of departments.

To carry forward this exercise in a structured manner, the Chief Secretary directed the constitution of a core team under the leadership of the Commissioner Secretary, ARI & Trainings Department, with representatives from the General Administration Department (GAD), Finance Department, Law Department and the concerned departments. The team shall undertake a comprehensive review of departmental cadres and



manpower requirements in the coming weeks to ensure optimum utilization of human resources across government departments.

The Chief Secretary further emphasized that updated Recruitment Rules are essential for enhancing administrative efficiency, ensuring transparent career progression for employees and creating opportunities for induction of skilled manpower possessing qualifications suited to modern governance requirements. He called upon all departments to expedite the process of revising and finalizing their Recruitment Rules within stipulated timelines.

Reviewing the status of Departmental Promotion Committees, the Chief Secretary stressed the importance of conducting DPCs in a timely and regular manner to facilitate career advancement of employees and maintain motivation within the workforce. He directed all departments to remove bottlenecks and ensure

that eligible employees receive promotions without undue delay.

The meeting also deliberated on the framework and skill sets required for recruitment of Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS). Discussions were held regarding the work being undertaken by the committee constituted earlier by the General Administration Department to examine the issue and formulate suitable recommendations for future recruitment.

Speaking during the discussions on recruitment of Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS), Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department, Shailendra Kumar, advised all Administrative Secretaries to clearly articulate the nature of skills and competencies required from MTS personnel in their respective departments.

He observed that such an exercise would help in discerning the evolving role of MTS employees across departments and facilitate informed decision-making

regarding their recruitment, deployment and capacity building.

Commissioner Secretary, General Administration Department, M. Raju, informed the meeting about the number of DPCs conducted by various departments across different cadres and presented details of employees promoted since October 2025. He also highlighted key challenges affecting timely conduct of DPCs, including pending litigations and delays in updating seniority lists, which have impacted the promotion process in several departments.

Earlier, Commissioner Secretary, ARI & Trainings Department, Shabnam Kamili, gave a detailed presentation on the status of Recruitment Rules currently under examination in the department. She apprised the meeting about cases that had been referred back to departments for compliance with observations and urged the concerned departments to resubmit the revised proposals at the

earliest for expeditious processing.

The meeting also reviewed the functioning of the online portal developed for processing Recruitment Rules. It was informed that several departments have already submitted proposals through the portal and that all technical issues affecting its operation have been successfully resolved.

The meeting was further apprised that extensive capacity-building measures have been undertaken for departmental officers to facilitate effective use of the portal and ensure smooth, transparent and time-bound updation of Recruitment Rules across the Government.

The Chief Secretary reiterated the Government's commitment towards modernizing human resource management practices, streamlining service structures and ensuring timely promotions, thereby enhancing administrative efficiency and improving service delivery to the people.

DC Srinagar, SSP finalise preparations for NEET-2026 examination



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 18: In order to finalize preparations and arrangements for the forthcoming re-examination of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET)-2026, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex here Thursday.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Srinagar Dr. G.V. Sundeep Chakravarthy was present on the occasion.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Additional Deputy Commissioner Aadir Fared, Nodal Principal Colleges, Prof. Seema Naaz, Joint Commissioner SMC, Nuzhat Qureshi, IAS Probationer Alfred Thomas, SP Headquarter, Umar Shah, Chief Planning Officer Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Secretary SMC, Tahir Magray, SDM West, Irfan Bahadur, SDM, East, Zubair Ahmad, Assistant

Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar, Chief Education Officer, Gh Mohi-ud Din, all Tehsildars, representatives of the National Testing Agency (NTA), senior Officers of the District Administration, Traffic Police, Centre Supervisors, During the meeting, a detailed review of all arrangements being put in place for the NEET-2026 re-examination scheduled to be held on June 21, 2026 was undertaken regarding

deputation of Examination Staff including Centre Superintendents, Invigilators and supporting personnel and secure transportation, handling of examination material and conduct of mock exercise. Discussions also focused on ensuring the availability of adequate infrastructure and facilities at all designated examination centres, including uninterrupted power and water supply, proper seating arrangements, sanitation, transportation, medical assistance and deployment of requisite staff.

DIPR's Cultural Unit conducts drug awareness programme in Srinagar

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 18: The Cultural Unit of the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Kashmir, organized an awareness programme under the Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan (NMJKA) at Greenland Paramedical College, Sangeen Darwaza, Hawal, Srinagar. The programme aimed at sensitizing students about the harmful effects of drug abuse and the importance of leading a healthy, addiction-free life. Students actively participated in the event and delivered insightful speeches highlighting the ill effects of substance abuse on individuals, families, and society.

A short play depicting the dangers of drug addiction was presented by the artists



of Mehak Dramatic Club. The impactful and engaging performance received enthusiastic applause from the audience for effectively conveying the anti-drug message. Student speakers who participated in the programme were felicitated for their contribution and awareness efforts.

Speaking on the occasion, AECO, Cultural Unit Kashmir, Syed Shakeel Shan, stressed the vital role of parental care and guidance in preventing substance abuse among youth. He also gave a detailed briefing on the ongoing Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan and emphasized the collective responsibility of society in combating the menace of drugs.

The Principal and staff of Greenland Paramedical College expressed their gratitude to the Cultural Unit, DIPR, for organizing such meaningful awareness programmes and creating awareness among students about the dangers of drug abuse. The programme concluded with a pledge by participants to support the vision of a drug-free Jammu and Kashmir.

SWD Srinagar organises awareness camp on Women Legal Entitlement

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 18: Social Welfare Department (SWD)-SANKALP Hub for Empowerment of Women Srinagar, organized an awareness camp on women's legal entitlements, including legal aid and legal counsel, at Anganwadi Zone Lal Bazar, Srinagar, on Thursday.

The programme was aimed at creating awareness among women regarding their legal rights and the various support mechanisms available to them for accessing justice. A large number of women from the area participated in the camp and actively engaged in the interactive sessions. Officials from SANKALP-HEW Srinagar highlighted the importance of legal awareness and informed participants about free legal aid services, legal counseling facilities, women's rights under various laws, protection against domestic violence, inheritance rights, and other welfare measures available through government agencies.

The participants were encouraged to seek legal assistance whenever required and were educated about the procedures for availing free legal aid through the concerned authorities.

The officials emphasized that legal empowerment is essential for ensuring gender equality and enabling women to make informed decisions about their lives and well-being.

JKAACL organize seminar on 'Life and Literary Contributions of Harbhajan Singh Sagar' in Srinagar

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 18: The Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL), in collaboration with the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, organised a one-day seminar on Thursday at Tagore Hall, Srinagar, on the life, works and literary contributions of eminent Punjabi short story writer Harbhajan Singh Sagar.

The event brought together noted literary personalities, scholars, writers, researchers and readers to remember the rich legacy of one of the most distinguished contemporary voices in Punjabi fiction.

The event was attended by Dr Rawail Singh, Convener, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi; Khalid Hussain, Member, Sahitya Akademi; Harvinder Kour, Secretary, JKAACL; Lal Chand, Additional Secretary, JKAACL; Popinder Singh Paras, Editor, Sheeraza Punjabi; and Sandeep Kour, Assistant Editor, among other distinguished guests.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Rawail Singh elaborated on the various initiatives being undertaken by the Sahitya Akademi for the promotion of Punjabi literature, language and culture across the country. He particularly highlighted programmes aimed at encouraging young writers

and fostering literary engagement among the younger generation. He underscored the importance of collaborative efforts among literary institutions to preserve India's diverse linguistic heritage.

Delivering the keynote address, Khalid Hussain presented a comprehensive overview of the life, literary journey and creative achievements of Harbhajan Singh Sagar. He emphasized the author's unique narrative style, deep humanism and commitment to portraying the realities of contemporary society through his fiction. He observed that Sagar's writings continue to inspire readers and emerging writers alike through their artistic excellence and social relevance. In her address, Harvinder Kour, Secretary, JKAACL, spoke in detail about the Academy's ongoing efforts to promote literature and recognize eminent literary personalities through a variety of programmes, including the popular "Meet the Eminent" series. She paid rich tributes to Harbhajan Singh Sagar, describing him as a significant contributor to Punjabi literature whose writings have earned wide appreciation and recognition in literary circles. She noted that such seminars provide an important platform for critical engagement with the works of leading writers and contribute to strengthening literary discourse.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER IRRIGATION & FC DIVISION SOPORE

eNIT No. 05 of 2026-27

Dated: 18/06/2026

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Expression of interest and E-Tender (in two cover system) on percentage basis are invited from eligible registered firms /Consultants/Agencies under Indian Partnership Act/ Societies Registration Act or registered companies under companies act for selection of consultant for Architectural and allied Engineering Consultancy Services for the following work

S. No	Name of Work	Advt. Cost.	Earnest Money	Tender fee (Cost of Doc.)	M.H. of account	Time of completion
01	Survey, geotechnical investigations, hydraulic & structural design detailed GFC drawings, cost estimates and vetting of design from NIT Sgr or DIQC, UT of J&K, setting out the layout points at the time of execution of the work and multiple consultancy visits etc as and when required during the execution and as per demand of site engineer for the work of "construction of the Headworks b.w.o wier on Ferozpora Nallah, Flood protection works on both sides of Ferozpora Nallah (up/ds of wier) & Installation of Gates with Escape Channel at Headworks	Rs. 3.00 Lacs	Rs.6000/-	300/-	Minor Irrigation sector Kashmir Major head 4702 under NABARD LOAN assistance.	15-days

The EO/NIT consisting of Qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, bill of quantities/activities (B.O.Q), tender documents, set of terms and conditions of bid/contract and other details can be viewed/downloaded from the website www.jktenders.gov.in as per the following bidding schedule.

1. Publishing Date	18/06/2026 from 16:00 Pm
2. Download Date Start	18/06/2026 from 16:00 Pm
3. Tender Submission date Starts	18/06/2026 from 16:00 Pm
4. Tender Submission date Ends	24/06/2026 from 03:00 Pm
5. Date of Opening Cover 1 st (Technical Bid)	25/06/2026 at 11:00 AM. Cover 2 nd subsequent to evaluation of Cover 1 st
6. Position of AAA Position of Ts Position of funds	Accorded Technically Sanctioned Under approved ceiling of above cited Head of account

Terms and conditions

- All transactions in respect of Bid security (Earnest money)/Tender fee (cost of document) shall be processed through the online EMD and tender fee mechanism using the below mentioned designated account: Account Name: Chief Engineer Kmr Irrigation & Flood Control. Account Number: 036701020000608. Bank: J&K Bank LTD (Tankipora Branch)
- Financial Bids will be opened online in the office of the tender opening authority of the technically responsive bidders.
- The bid for the work shall remain open for acceptance for a period of 90 days from the date of opening of bids.
- Any bidder/tenderer withdraws his bid/tender before the said period or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid, the bid security (earnest money) shall stand forfeited.
- Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. Instructions to bidders regarding e-tendering process. The interested bidder can download the NIT/bidding document from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in>
- To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get (DSC) "Digital Signature Certificate" as per Information Technology Act-2000, to participate in online bidding. This certificate will be required for digitally signing the bid. Bidders can get above mentioned digital certificate from any approved vendors
- The Bidders, who already possess valid (DSC) Digital Signature Certificates, need not to procure new Digital Signature Certificate.
- The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with Digital Signature. No Proposal will be accepted in physical form.
- Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned above. Before submission of online bids, bidders must ensure that scanned copies of all the necessary documents have been produced when required.
- The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission of bids whatsoever reasons may be.
- All the required information for bid must be filled and submitted online.
- The original instruments in respect of cost of Documents, EMD and relevant documents of LI must be submitted to the Tender Opening Authority before the issuance of letter of allotment is issued in favour of the lowest bidder.
- The details of cost of documents, EMD instrument specified in the tender documents should be uploaded online (scanned copies) otherwise bid will not be accepted.
- The guidelines for submission of bid online can be downloaded from the website: <https://jktenders.gov.in> The Department will not be responsible online for delay in online submission due to any reason.
- The Bidder must ensure that details with respect to point to no 2 are complied with strictly and should upload/produce the details thereof/whatsoever be the mechanism for same)
- Penalty for delay in completion: -In case of delay in completion of work beyond stipulated period of completion, penalty upto maximum of 10% of the contract shall be imposed.
- Time extension: -Suitable time extension shall be granted in case of increase in scope of work and in the event of delay beyond control of Bidder to be determined by the department.
- Advance Payment: - No mobilization advance / equipment advance shall be paid.
- The tender receiving authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
- The tender/ bid is liable to rejection if it does not fulfill the requirement as laid down in NIT.
- One Bid per Bidder. Each Bidder shall submit only one Bid for one work. A Bidder who submits more than one Bid will cause the proposals with the Bidder's participation to be disqualified.
- Cost of Bidding: The Bidder shall bear all costs associated with the preparation and submission of his Bid, and the Employer will, in no case be responsible or liable for those costs.
- Site Visit: The Bidder, at his own cost, responsibility and risk is encouraged to visit, examine and familiarize himself with the site of works and its surroundings and obtain all information that may be necessary for preparing the Bid and entering into a contract for construction of the works. The costs of visiting the site shall be at the Bidder's own expense. He may contact the Executive Engineer in-charge of work for any guidance relating to site visit.
- Throughout these documents the terms "bid" and "tender" and their derivatives (bidder/ tenderer, bid/tender, bidding/tendering etc.) are synonymous
- All other terms and conditions are as same as laid in PWD Form 25.

No: I&FC/1304-14 Dated: 18-06-2026

DIPK-2291/26
DATED: 18-06-2026

Sd/-
Executive Engineer Irrigation & FC Division Sopore

Dy CM chairs meeting on revival of customary mining activities

KT News Desk

Srinagar, June 18: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary on Thursday emphasized the need for prompt decisions regarding the sand and stone quarrying and lifting of loose material across Kashmir to ensure the uninterrupted availability of construction material for the public.

The Deputy Chief Minister made these remarks while chairing a meeting held to review the revival of customary mining activities and stone quarrying at identified locations across Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Members of the Legislative Assembly, including Justice (Retd) Hasnain Masoodi, Ahsan Ahmad Pardesi, Hilal Akbar Lone, Nizam-ud-Din Bhat, Javed Hassan Baig, and Mushtaq Ahmad Guroo besides Additional Chief Secretary, Mining Department, Director Geology & Mining, Director Finance Mining, Joint Directors and District Mineral Officers.

While reiterating the government's commitment to completely curb the illegal mining activities, the Deputy Chief Minister stated that people should not face any shortage of construction material due to restrictions on unlawful operations. He called for timely



formulation of a comprehensive Mining Policy for Jammu and Kashmir to ensure the optimal utilization of mineral resources while safeguarding the environmental interests. He stressed transparency in mining operations and directed the concerned authorities to ensure that no illegal mining practices are allowed in any district. The Deputy Chief Minister also emphasized the need for effective royalty collection from all the companies engaged in mining activities across Kashmir and called for the speedy disposal of pending penalties and court cases related to mining operations.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding the revival of customary stone quarrying activities at identified locations including at Panthachowk in Srinagar, Sadrekoot Bala in Bandipora, and other related locations.

The Deputy Chief Minister underscored the importance of balancing developmental needs with environmental sustainability and directed the concerned departments to expedite the process of finalizing modalities for regulated mining operations.

The meeting explored mechanisms for the structured revival

of quarrying activities and outlined a comprehensive way forward in the interest of public convenience.

The Deputy Chief Minister directed the concerned departments to work in close coordination and ensure that all decisions are taken in a transparent, environmentally responsible and people-centric manner, facilitating the availability of construction material while preserving ecological balance.

He also asserted on speedy disposal of penalty and court cases for the seamless functioning of the department.

15 lakh gallon daily water deficit to end by 2027 in Sopore

Waris Fayaz

Sopore, June 18: Relief appears to be on the horizon for thousands of residents in North Kashmir's Sopore area as a major drinking water project under the AMRUT 2.0 scheme is set to bridge the town's longstanding water shortage of nearly 15 lakh gallons per day till 2040.

Officials said that the project, being executed at Krankshivan Colony, will generate more than 32 lakh gallons of potable water daily, significantly enhancing the town's supply capacity and providing a long term solution to recurring shortages that have plagued several localities, particularly tail end areas. Once completed, the project is expected to transform the water supply scenario across all 21 municipal wards of Sopore. Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Department Sopore, Mushtaq Ahmed Wani, said the project is progressing at a steady pace and is scheduled for completion by September 2027.

"Sopore is presently facing a deficit of around 15 lakh gallons per day. The AMRUT 2.0



facing shortages. Simultaneously, inspection teams have been constituted to conduct regular checks and take action under the Water Regulation Act against misuse of drinking water," Wani said.

Meanwhile, MLA Sopore Irshad Rasool Kar, who recently inspected the project site, described the scheme as a landmark initiative that would permanently address drinking water shortages in the town.

Kar said the department would lay more than 121 kilometres of pipeline network under the project, ensuring improved distribution and access to drinking water across Sopore's urban areas.

The legislator termed it one of the largest drinking water projects being executed in the Kashmir Valley and said the overall investment, including land acquisition and allied works, is expected to cross Rs 100 crore. For years, residents of Sopore have faced recurring water shortages, especially during peak summer months. Several localities, particularly those situated at tail ends of the supply network, often report irregular water supply and low pressure.

project, estimated at over Rs 73 crore, will generate more than 32 lakh gallons daily and cater to the needs of the town till 2040," Wani said.

According to the official, the department continues to face challenges in ensuring equitable water distribution, particularly during the summer season when demand rises sharply. He said misuse of treated drinking water for non-domestic purposes often affects supply in tail end areas, forcing the department to deploy tanker services to sustain water availability in affected localities. "We have pressed six water tankers into service to cater to areas

BJP dividing Oppn to clear path for UCC, ONOE: MP Ruhullah

Jahangeer Ganaie

Awantipora, June 18: Member Parliament and senior National Conference leader Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi on Thursday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of attempting to weaken and divide opposition parties across the country to pave the way for the implementation of major legislative initiatives such as "One Nation, One Election (ONOE)" and the Uniform Civil Code (UCC)."

While addressing a public gathering here in South Kashmir, Ruhullah said, "By dividing the opposition parties the BJP is trying to secure a two-thirds majority in Parliament and pave the way for the implementation of major legislative initiatives such as "One Nation, One Election" and the Uniform Civil Code (UCC)."

He also criticised political developments involving Trinamool Congress MP Yusuf Pathan, claiming that leaders who were given political opportunities by opposition parties should remain committed to the platforms that supported them.

He said that Pathan was brought from Gujarat to fight elections in Bengal and given mandate from where he could win easily so that he remains committed with the party and public but he failed to do so.

Ruhullah said that when there were talks that his house will be demolished, all Trinamool Congress members were backing him that they didn't allow it to happen but he has let the down now.

PEOPLE IN J&K FACING DIFFICULTIES

Ruhullah said that people in Jammu and Kashmir continue



to face difficulties at multiple levels and expressed concern over what he described as the increasing presence of officials from outside the region in key administrative and policing positions.

"People entrusted with power have failed to ease the hardships faced by the public. The concerns of the people remain unresolved, and there is growing dissatisfaction over the functioning of the administration," he said.

The National Conference leader stressed that the struggle for the rights and interests of Jammu and Kashmir should continue through democratic and constitutional means. He urged people to remain united and actively participate in democratic processes to ensure that their voices are heard.

He said that public is the best judge and they can say about the performance of the government in last two years.

PRESENT J&K GOVT HAS FAILED ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of the programme,

Ruhullah, as per KNO, alleged that the present government has failed on multiple fronts and has been unable to deliver meaningful change. "More than two years have passed, yet neither at the administrative level nor on the political front has any significant transformation been witnessed. Those in power should introspect and examine their performance," he said.

He said that had he got the same backing from his party-men, he would have been able to raise up more issues of public importance in Parliament.

RESIDENTS HIGHLIGHT ISSUES

During the event, residents from different areas highlighted a range of civic, developmental and administrative issues. The MP listened to the grievances and assured the public that genuine concerns would be taken up with the relevant authorities and addressed on a priority basis.

The public interaction programme witnessed significant participation from local residents, who raised concerns related to infrastructure, public services, employment, education and development. Ruhullah reiterated his commitment to ensuring effective representation of public issues and said he would continue engaging with people at the grassroots level to address their concerns.

He further emphasized the need for strengthening public infrastructure, improving the delivery of essential services and ensuring greater accountability in governance, stating that elected representatives must remain accessible and responsive to the people they serve—(KNO)

DIO Baramulla issues media advisory

Urges Media outlets to keep security protocols out of public domain

Waris Fayaz

Baramulla, June 18: The District Information Office (DIO), Baramulla, on Thursday issued a media advisory urging journalists, local news portals and social media content creators and freelance media professionals to exercise caution while recording, publishing and circulating content related to official visits, public events, security arrangements and law enforcement activities.

The advisory comes a day after Baramulla Police issued similar guidelines, stressing the need for responsible reporting and content dissemination in matters involving security and public safety.

The advisory asked the media stakeholders to refrain from capturing, highlighting or publishing visuals that may reveal security arrangements or protective details of officers and dignitaries.

It specifically cautions against sharing information related to deployment patterns of police and security personnel, access control and frisking procedures, movement management systems, evacuation plans, escort formations, route security measures, communication equipment, command locations and operational procedures.

The Information Department has also advised media professionals to avoid publishing close up visuals of personnel engaged in sensitive security

duties or any imagery that could inadvertently disclose security related protocols and arrangements.

The advisory states that such precautions are intended to safeguard security personnel, ensure public safety and prevent the misuse of sensitive information by undesirable elements.

Apart from security related concerns, the department has called upon media persons to maintain professional standards while editing and publishing content. It has urged journalists and content creators to ensure that videos, photographs and social media posts relating to official functions, public meetings, government programmes and VIP or VVIP visits are not accompanied by inappropriate audio, visual effects or captions that may undermine the dignity of the institutions or events concerned.

Seeking cooperation from media stakeholders, the department said responsible journalism plays a vital role in promoting public awareness while safeguarding public order and security.

Police advisory earlier stated that media coverage of public events and official programmes is welcome, but must not compromise operational security. It advised prior permission for recording police personnel or security arrangements and warned that publication of material prejudicial to security or public order may invite action under law—(KNO)

Eight Ladakh handicrafts get GI tag



Raja Syed Rather

Leh, June 18: Eight traditional handicraft products from Ladakh have been awarded the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag, in a major boost to the preservation and promotion of the Union Territory's rich cultural heritage.

The recognition highlights Ladakh's unique craftsmanship, indigenous knowledge systems, and centuries-old artisanal traditions, while helping safeguard and promote these culturally significant products at the national and global levels.

The newly registered GI-tagged products include - Ladakh Challi Textiles, Ladakh Thigma, Ladakh Painting, Pabu of Ladakh, Ladakh Nambu Textile, Ladakh Pashmina Textile, Ladakh Chilling Metal Work and Ladakh Likir Pottery.

The recognition marks a major achievement in safeguarding Ladakh's traditional crafts and artistic expressions while enhancing their visibility in national and international markets. GI registration provides legal protection to products linked to a specific geographical region and acknowledges the distinctive qualities, reputation and cultural significance associated with their place of origin.

"The conferment of GI status on these eight traditional Ladakhi products is a matter of immense pride for the people of Ladakh. These recognitions are not merely certifications; they are a tribute to the centuries-old craftsmanship, artistry, and cultural heritage of our people. Each product embodies the creativity of our artisans and the unique identity of Ladakh," Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena said. "The GI tag will ensure global recognition, authenticity, and protection for our artisans, empowering them with rightful economic opportunities while safeguarding Ladakh's unique traditions."

The newly GI-tagged products represent diverse facets of Ladakhi life, culture and craftsmanship. The LG lauded the skills and dedication of artisans, cooperatives, and cultural custodians whose skills, dedication and tireless efforts have brought this honour to Ladakh.

Unusual fruit drop in Shopian orchards

Growers suspect fungicide

Jahangeer Ganaie

Shopian, June 18: Anxiety has gripped apple-growing villages of south Kashmir's Shopian district after orchardists reported an unusual and significant fruit drop in their orchards, with many growers suspecting a recently used fungicide may be linked to the damage.

The incident has raised concerns over the quality and safety of agrochemicals being used during the crucial fruit development stage. The affected growers belong mainly to Sugoo, Handhama and adjoining areas, where large quantities of apples began falling from trees within days of pesticide and fungicide applications. Several farmers fear the losses could severely affect this season's harvest and their annual income.

"We have never witnessed such a large-scale fruit drop in recent years," an orchardist from Sugoo said. "The fruits were developing normally, but after the spray application, they started falling continuously. In some portions

of the orchard, nearly half of the crop has been lost."

Another grower from Handhama expressed concern over the uncertainty surrounding the cause of the damage. "We invest lakhs of rupees every year on sprays, fertilisers, and orchard management. If the chemicals themselves become a threat to our crop, it will be devastating for farmers," he said. According to complaints submitted by orchardists, several affected orchards had been treated with a Mancozeb-based fungicide along with other plant protection chemicals during May and early June. Farmers alleged that the fruit drop was noticed shortly after the sprays were applied, prompting them to seek intervention from the Horticulture Department.

Acting on the complaints, officials from the Horticulture Department, including the Horticulture Development Officers of Imam Sahib and Zainapora, accompanied by representatives of the Pesticide Association Shopian, conducted a field inspection of the affected orchards.



During the inspection, officials documented spray schedules followed by different orchardists. In one case, an orchardist had applied Super M45 (Mancozeb 75% WP) along with Thiamethoxam on May 17, followed by Difenoconazole and Propineb on

June 4. Another grower had used Super M45 and Thiamethoxam on May 19, while a third orchardist applied the same combination on May 18 and later sprayed Calcium Chloride and Antracol on June 3. Officials noted that an unusual fruit drop was observed in all the inspected orchards. A farmer present during the inspection said, "We only used the products recommended by dealers and commonly used by orchardists. We hope the authorities identify the actual cause quickly and ensure compensation if defective chemicals are found responsible."

The inspection team also visited the pesticide dealer from whom the product was purchased. However, officials found no remaining stock of the suspected fungicide at the premises. The department later learned that samples of the product had already been collected from the Kachdoora area by the district enforcement wing and sent to a laboratory for analysis. Officials informed growers that the sale of the suspected product has been stopped across the district as

a precautionary measure until test results become available.

The Horticulture Department has advised orchardists across Shopian to refrain from using the fungicide in question until scientific investigations are completed.

In an official communication, the Horticulture Development Officer recommended that experts from the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST) visit the affected orchards and collect fruit and leaf samples for detailed examination to determine whether the chemical application contributed to the observed damage. Officials said that no direct connection between the fungicide and the fruit drop has been established so far and that conclusions can only be drawn after laboratory testing and scientific assessment.

However, growers have urged authorities to expedite the investigation, arguing that delays could increase uncertainty among farmers at a critical stage of the apple-growing season.

EDITORIAL

Friday Brief: The Month That Belongs To Allah

Muharram is not merely the first month of the Islamic calendar; it is a threshold into the soul of time itself. One of the four sacred months mentioned by Allah, it stands apart as a season of stillness, remembrance, and spiritual urgency. The Almighty declares: "Indeed, the number of months with Allah is twelve... of these, four are sacred" (9:36). Among them, Muharram holds a unique place, called by the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) "the month of Allah." He said: "The

best of fasting after Ramadan is fasting in the month of Allah, Muharram" (Sahih Muslim). This naming signals that the month belongs to the Divine in a way others do not. It is a time to pause, look inward, and measure the distance between who we are and who we long to become. The fast of Ashura, the 10th day, is a profound act of spiritual alignment—uniting the believer with the arc of prophetic history. When the Prophet learned that the Jews fasted on this day to commemorate the deliverance of

Musa (Peace Be Upon Him) from Pharaoh, he said: "We are closer to Musa than you are" (Sahih al-Bukhari). And so he fasted, linking himself to the long chain of those who sought liberation through devotion. The Day of Ashura is layered with meaning. It is the day Allah parted the sea for Musa, offering freedom to the oppressed. It is also the day of Karbala, when Hazrat Hussain (RA), the Prophet's beloved grandson, stood against the tyranny of Yazid. His martyrdom was not merely a historical event;

it was a cosmic reminder that truth and falsehood cannot coexist in peace. Hazrat Hussain's (RA) sacrifice was a refusal to bow to injustice, a declaration that faith is not passive but active, not comfortable but costly. Muharram is a month of mourning, but also of awakening. Karbala is not an invitation to despair but to defiance—a call to remember that sometimes the most powerful stand is the one that ends in apparent defeat. Hazrat Hussain's (RA) blood became the ink in which the principle of resistance

to tyranny was written for all time. As the month begins, let us use this sacred season to reflect on the fragility of life and the permanence of truth. The fast of Ashura offers a chance to seek forgiveness for the past year, and the remembrance of Karbala reminds us that faith is not a shield from pain but a strength to bear it. May this Muharram be for us a door into deeper awareness and a light that guides us toward the courage of Hazrat Hussain (RA) and the gratitude of Musa.

MUHARRAM

The Sacred Month That Begins The Islamic Calendar

Muharram is the month with which Muslims begin their lunar Hijrah Calendar. It is one of the four sanctified months about which the Holy Quran says: 'The number of months according to Allah is twelve months. Among these there are four sanctified.' These months – Zulqadah, Zulhijjah, Muharram, and Rajab – were specifically termed sanctified because their sanctity was accepted even by the pagans of Makkah.

Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani

Muharram is the month with which the Muslims begin their lunar Hijrah Calendar. It is one of the four sanctified months about which the Holy Quran says, "The number of the months according to Allah is twelve months (mentioned in the Book of Allah on the day in which He created heavens and the earth. Among these (twelve months) there are four sanctified".

These four months, according to the authentic traditions are the months of Zulqadah, Zulhijjah, Muharram and Rajab. All the commentators of the Holy Quran are unanimous on this point, because the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in his sermon on the occasion of his last Hajj, has declared:

"One year consists of twelve months, of which four are sanctified months, three of them are in sequence; Zulqadah, Zulhijjah, Muharram, and the fourth is Rajab."

The specific mention of these four months does not mean that any other month has no sanctity, because the month of Ramadan is admittedly the most sanctified month in the year. But these four months were specifically termed as sanctified months for the simple reason that their sanctity was accepted even by the pagans of Makkah.

In fact, every month, out of the twelve, is originally equal to the other, and there is no inherent sanctity, which may be attributed to one of them in comparison to other months. When Allah Almighty chooses a particular time for His special blessings, then it acquires sanctity out of His grace.

Thus, the sanctity of these four months was recognized right from the days of Sayyidina Ibrahim (PBUH). Since the Pagans of Makkah attributed themselves to Sayyidina Ibrahim (PBUH) they observed the sanctity of these four months and despite their frequent tribal battles, they held it unlawful to fight in these months.

In the Shariah of our Holy Prophet (PBUH) the sanctity of these months was upheld and the Holy Quran referred to them as the "sanctified months".

The month of Muharram has certain other characteristics peculiar to it, which are specified below.

Fasting during the month
The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has said: "The best fasts after the fasts of Ramadan are those of the month of Muharram."

Although the fasts of the month of Muharram are not obligatory, yet, the one who fasts in these days out of his own will and choice is entitled to a great reward by Allah Almighty. The Hadith cited above signifies that the fasts of the month of Muharram are most reward-able ones among the Naf fasts i.e. the fasts one observes out of his own choice without being obligatory on him.

The Hadith does not mean that the award promised for fasts of Muharram can be achieved only by fasting for the whole month. On the contrary, each fast during this month has merit. Therefore, one should avail of this opportunity as much as we can.

The day of Ashurah
Although the month of Muharram is a sanctified month as a whole, yet, the 10th day of Muharram is the most sacred among all its days. The day is named Ashurah.

According to the Holy companion Ibn Abbas. The Holy Prophet (PBUH), when migrated to Madinah, found that the Jews of Madinah used to fast on the 10th day of Muharram. They said that it was the day



on which the Holy Prophet Musa (Moses) (PBUH) and his followers crossed the Red Sea miraculously and the Pharaoh was drowned in its water.

On hearing this from the Jews, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said, "We are more closely related to Musa than you" and directed the Muslims to fast on the day of Ashurah. (Abu Dawood)

It is also reported in a number of authentic traditions that in the beginning, fasting on the day of Ashurah was obligatory for the Muslims.

It was later that the fasts of Ramadan were made obligatory and the fast on the day of "Ashurah was made optional. Sayyidah Aishah (RA) has said:

"When the Holy Prophet (PBUH) came to Madinah, he fasted on the day of Ashurah and directed the people to fast it. But when the fasts of Ramadan were made obligatory, the obligation of fasting was confined to Ramadan and the obligatory nature of the fast of Ashurah was abandoned. One can fast on this day, if he so wills, or can avoid fasting, if he so wills."

However, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to fast on the day of Ashurah even after the fasting in Ramadan was made obligatory.

Abdullah lan Masud reports that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) preferred the fast of Ashurah to the fast of other days and preferred the fast of Ramadan to the fast of Ashurah. (Bukhari and Muslim)

In short, it is established through a number of authentic hadith that fasting on the day of Ashurah is Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and makes one entitled to a great reward.

According to another Hadith, it is more

advisable that the fast of Ashurah should either be prefixed or suffixed by another fast. It means that one should fast two days: the 9th and 10th of Muharram or the 10th and 11th of it. The reason of this additional fast as mentioned by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is that the Jews used to fast on the day of Ashurah alone, and the Holy Prophet (PBUH) wanted to distinguish the Islamic way of fasting from that of Jews. Therefore, he advised the Muslims to add another fast to that of Ashurah.

Some traditions signify another feature of the day of Ashurah.

According to these traditions one should be more generous to his family by providing more food to them on this day as compared to other days. These traditions are not very authentic according to the science of Hadith. Yet, some Scholars like Baihaqi and Ibn Hibban have accepted them as reliable.

What is mentioned above is all that is supported through authentic sources about Ashurah.

However, there are some legends and misconceptions with regard to Ashurah that have managed to find their way into the minds of the ignorant, but have no support of authentic Islamic sources, some very common of them are these:

This is the day in which Adam was created.

This is the day in which Ibrahim was born.

This is the day in which Allah accepted the repentance of Sayyidina Ibrahim (PBUH).

This is the day on which the Qiyamah (dooms-day) will take place.

Whoever takes bath in the day of Ashurah

will never get ill.

All these and other similar whims and fancies are totally baseless and the traditions referred to in this respect are not worthy of any credit.

Some people take it as Sunnah to prepare a particular type of meal in the day of Ashurah. This practice, too, has no basis in the authentic Islamic sources.

Some other people attribute the sanctity of Ashurah to the martyrdom of Sayyidina Hussain (RA) during his battle with the Syrian army. No doubt, the martyrdom of Sayyidina Hussain (RA) is one of the most tragic episodes of our history. Yet, the sanctity of Ashurah cannot be ascribed to this event for the simple reason that the sanctity of Ashurah was established during the days of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) much earlier than the birth of Sayyidina Hussain (RA).

On the contrary, it is one of the merits of Sayyidina Hussain (RA) that his martyrdom took place on the day of Ashurah.

Another misconception about the month of Muharram is that it is an evil or unlucky month, for Sayyidina Hussain (RA) was killed in it. It is for this misconception that people avoid holding marriage ceremonies in the month of Muharram. This is again a baseless concept which is contrary to the express teachings of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah. Such superstitions have been totally negated by the Holy Prophet (PBUH). If the death of an eminent person in a particular day renders that day unlucky for all times to come, one can hardly find a day, free from this bad luck, out of 365 days of the whole year, because each and every day has a history of the demise of some eminent person. The Holy Quran and the Sunnah of

the Holy Prophet (PBUH) have made us free from such superstitious beliefs, and they should deserve no attention.

Another wrong practice related to this month is to hold the lamentation and mourning ceremonies in the memory of martyrdom of Sayyidna Hussain (RA).

As mentioned earlier, the event of Karbala is one of the most tragic events of our history, but the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has forbidden us from holding the mourning ceremonies on the death of any person. The people of Jahiliyyah (Ignorance) used to mourn over their deceased relatives or friends through loud lamentations, by tearing their clothes and by beating their cheeks and chests. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) stopped the Muslims from doing all this and directed them to observe patience by saying "Inna lillaahi wa innaa ilayhi raji oon". A number of authentic hadith are available on the subject.

To quote only one of them: "He is not from our group who slaps his cheeks, tears his clothes and cries in the manner of the people of jahiliyyah."

All the authentic jurists are unanimous on the point that the mourning of this type is absolutely impermissible. Even Sayyidna Hussain (RA) shortly before his demise, had advised his beloved sister Sayyidah Zainab not to mourn over his death in this manner. He said:

"My dear sister, I swear upon you that you, in case I die, shall not tear your clothes, nor scratch your face, nor curse anyone for me or pray for your death".

It is evident from this advice of Sayyidna Hussain (RA) that this type of mourning is condemned even by the blessed person for the memory of whom these mourning ceremonies are held. Every Muslim should avoid this practice and abide by the teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his beloved grandchild Sayyidina Hussain (RA).

Blessings of Muharram
It is the first month of the Islamic Calendar.

The meaning of the word: The word "Muharram" means "Forbidden." Even before Islam, this month was always known as a scared month in which all unlawful acts were forbidden, prominently the shedding of blood.

A blessing of Muharram: There are many bounties of this month, especially the tenth of Muharram.

Two of the many virtues of the 10th of Muharram:

On this day he who spends more lavishly for the sake of his family members, Allah Taala will bestow blessing upon the sustenance of the following year.

Abu Qataada has related that the Prophet (PBUH) has reported to have said, it is my thought that by fasting on the 10th of Muharram Allah Taala will pardon the sins of the past year. (Tirmizi)

Events of Muharram
Hadhrat Hussain (RA) was martyred in this month.

Shaykhain Tirmizi & Haakim has narrated from Anas that the following verse: "Allah may forgive thee of thy sins that which is past and that which is to come." (Al-Fath) was revealed on the 10th of Muharram.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) went to defeat Bani Muhaarir and Bani Tha'laba (Tribes of Bani Gatfan) in the year 4 A.H. (Asahhus-siyar)

Courtesy: IslamiCity

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Public engagement essential pillar of effective Governance: Sakeena Itoo

'Regular interactions with citizens provide valuable insights into local challenges'

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JUNE 18: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, on Thursday held a series of interactions with public delegations and citizens at Civil Secretariat, Jammu, listening to their concerns and assuring them of timely and effective redressal.

During the public outreach, delegations representing different areas and sectors apprised the Minister of issues related to healthcare infrastructure, educational facilities, social welfare initiatives, public utilities and other developmental needs. Several individuals also met the Minister to present grievances and seek intervention on matters concerning their localities.

Giving a patient hearing to all representations, the Minister, as per an official statement, reiterated the Government's commitment to responsive, transparent and people-centric governance. She emphasized that public engagement remains an essential pillar of effective administration and helps ensure that developmental



policies are aligned with the needs and aspirations of the people.

Highlighting the Government's focused approach towards improving grassroots governance, the Minister said that regular interactions with

citizens provide valuable insights into local challenges and enable the administration to formulate practical and inclusive solutions. She added that strengthening last-mile service delivery and enhancing

accountability at every level remain key priorities of the Government.

She assured all public delegations and individuals that their genuine issues and concerns will be addressed on priority.

JKTPO conducts export awareness workshop in Kishtwar

KT News Desk

KISHTWAR, JUNE 18: The Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO), Industries & Commerce Department, on Thursday organised an Export Awareness Workshop, E-Commerce Onboarding Drive and India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Awareness Session at Kishtwar under the guidance of Managing Director JKTPO Sudershan Kumar.

The programme, as per an official statement, was organised in collaboration with the District Administration Kishtwar and drew participation from nearly 50 entrepreneurs, artisans, farmers, MSMEs, self-help groups and aspiring exporters from across the district.

The event commenced with welcome remarks by Faculty JKTPO Vishal Ray, who highlighted the importance of export promotion, digital commerce adoption and market diversification and briefed participants on JKTPO's initiatives for facilitating market access, capacity building and export readiness.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar Pawan Kotwal, who graced the event as Chief Guest, highlighted the



district's potential in agriculture, horticulture, handloom, handicrafts and value-added products and encouraged entrepreneurs to explore national and international markets. General Manager District Industries Centre Kishtwar Rishi Sharma reiterated the administration's commitment to promoting entrepreneurship, industrial growth and export development.

During the Export Awareness Session, Gaurav Gupta from the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) provided insights into export procedures, documentation requirements, market identification and schemes available for exporters. Ullas Kumar from

the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC) conducted a session on export credit insurance, risk mitigation and financial safeguards for businesses venturing into international trade.

Representatives from the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) and the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) briefed participants on digital commerce opportunities, onboarding procedures and the advantages of accessing wider markets online. Three entrepreneurs submitted on-the-spot applications for onboarding on ONDC, with the process expected to be completed by the end of the day.

DC Shopian reviews RDD developmental activities



KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JUNE 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta, Thursday chaired a review meeting to discuss various issues related to the functioning of the Rural Development Department and assess the progress of developmental activities being implemented across the district under various flagship government schemes.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, reviewed the status of ongoing developmental works, implementation of government schemes, progress achieved under various flagship programmes and the overall functioning of field-level offices.

Special focus was laid on addressing operational and administrative issues affecting the smooth execution of departmental works. Various issues and concerns raised by the BDOs and Panchayat Secretaries were discussed in detail.

The DC directed the concerned to resolve the issues and ensure seamless implementation of developmental works.

Emphasizing the need for regular monitoring of works, the DC instructed all field staff and supervisory authorities to discharge their duties with dedication and responsibility and ensure strict adherence to departmental guidelines viz a viz quality and durability of works.

He also directed that all completed and ongoing works be promptly uploaded on the designated online portals to facilitate effective monitoring and real time tracking of progress.

The DC directed the Block Development Officers to enhance person-days (PD) generation under MGNREGA and expedite the completion of all ongoing works in a time bound manner before the transition of the programme to VB-G RAM G.

Reviewing the pendency of works in different blocks, the DC called upon the officers to accelerate the pace of execution and achieve tangible progress on the ground.

The meeting was attended by ADDC, Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone; ACD, Shopian, Muzaffar Ahmad; SDM Zainapora, Bilal Ahmad; BDOs and Panchayat Secretaries from all blocks of the district.

MP Ruhullah Mehdi convenes Public Darbar in Awantipora

Directs officers of concerned departments to take prompt action on genuine grievances and issues raised during interaction

KT News Desk

PULWAMA, JUNE 18: Member of Parliament, Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency, Agha Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, on Thursday convened a Public Darbar at Town Hall Awantipora to hear public grievances and developmental concerns of the people.

During the interaction, delegations, as per an official statement, from various areas of Awantipora and adjoining regions, besides representatives of trade bodies, social organizations, welfare & development forums, Auqaf committees, senior citizens and other stakeholders participated in the event. The suggestions and demands put forth during the Public Darbar pertained to various sectors.



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.

On the occasion, he also directed officers of the concerned departments to take

prompt action on genuine grievances and issues raised during the interaction and ensure their timely redressal.

The Public Darbar witnessed participation from the public and various stakeholders. District and sectoral officers from different departments were also present on the occasion.

DU, JNU students visit Martyr ADDC Dr Raj Kumar Thapa memorial in Rajouri

KT News Desk

RAJOURI, JUNE 18: A delegation of students from Delhi University (DU) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) visited the Martyr ADDC Dr Raj Kumar Thapa Memorial, Museum and Library in Rajouri, paying homage to the martyred officer and gaining insights into his public service and legacy.

Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma, as per an official statement, interacted with the students and highlighted the life, service and sacrifice of Martyr Additional District Development Commissioner Dr Raj Kumar Thapa, describing him as a people-centric officer whose commitment to public welfare left a lasting impact on the district.

The DC also briefed the



students on the collective efforts undertaken during Operation Sindoor, emphasising the role played by civil society organisations, NGOs, volunteers and local population in supporting the district administration and how coordinated action ensured timely relief to affected populations.

The students appreciated the initiative to preserve the memory and contributions of Dr Raj Kumar Thapa and suggested inclusion of additional books and reference material on the Line of Control, border studies and the India-Pakistan wars to enrich the library's academic value.

DC Doda reviews arrangements for Annual Religious Yatras 2026

KT NEWS DESK

DODA, JUNE 18: Deputy Commissioner Doda Krishan Lal Thursday chaired a review meeting at the Conference Hall, DC Office Complex Doda, to assess and finalise arrangements for the forthcoming and ongoing annual religious yatras across the district.

The meeting, as per an official statement, conducted a detailed review of arrangements covering security, traffic regulation, transportation, healthcare, fire and emergency response, sanitation, power and water supply, communication and



other allied services required for the conduct of the yatras.

DC Doda and SSP Doda were instructed to maintain close coordination with Yatra Management Committees and promptly address any issues arising during the yatras. PHE, PWD, PDD and ARTO were directed to ensure adequate

yatra locations and ensure all necessary facilities are in place well in advance. Tehsildars were instructed to maintain close coordination with Yatra Management Committees and promptly address any issues arising during the yatras. PHE, PWD, PDD and ARTO were directed to ensure adequate

infrastructure and logistical support and to coordinate with the committees for timely resolution of grievances.

Highlighting disaster preparedness, the DC directed Tehsildars and Naib Tehsildars to identify vulnerable and disaster-prone stretches along yatra routes, particularly in high-altitude areas and put in place suitable arrangements to ensure the safety of devotees.

SSP Kartik Shrotriya stressed the need for strong local-level coordination among all stakeholders to facilitate the conduct of the yatras and maintain law

and order throughout the pilgrimage period.

ADC Doda briefed the meeting on permissions for setting up Yatra Langars, emphasising that langars should be established only at safe locations outside disaster-prone areas.

Among those present were Additional Deputy Commissioner Doda, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B), Superintending Engineer Jal Shakti (Hydraulic), Chief Medical Officer and other district officers. Several officers participated through virtual mode.

Campaign Against Drug Abuse

District Admin Kulgam felicitates winners of district-level competitions

KT News Desk

KULGAM, JUNE 18: District Administration Kulgam Thursday organized a grand Felicitation Ceremony at the Auditorium Hall, Kulgam, to honour the winners and outstanding participants of various competitions conducted under the aegis of the 100-Day Special Campaign against Drug Abuse under Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA).

The event, as per an official statement, celebrated the achievements of students and youth who participated in district-level competitions held across schools, blocks and municipal areas, including Essay Writing, Painting, Speech and Slogan Writing Competitions, as well as Sports Tournaments, Marathon Events and the District Ideathon.

The competitions witnessed enthusiastic participation from thousands of students and youth



across the district and served as a powerful medium to spread awareness about the harmful effects of substance abuse while promoting creativity, healthy lifestyles, sportsmanship and community engagement.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, congratulated all the winners and participants for their remarkable performances and appreciated their contribution towards strengthening the movement for a drug-free society.

He emphasized that the fight against drug abuse requires active participation of youth, educational

institutions, parents and civil society and highlighted that such initiatives help channelize the energy and talent of young people towards constructive pursuits.

The Deputy Commissioner further stated that the District Administration remains committed to creating platforms for youth engagement through sports, innovation, cultural activities and awareness programmes. He urged the youth to become ambassadors of the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan and play an active role in spreading the message of a healthy, drug-free and progressive society.

DC Rajouri reviews health sector performance under NHM

KT News Desk

RAJOURI, JUNE 18: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma chaired a review meeting of the health sector under the National Health Mission (NHM) to assess the progress of healthcare initiatives, developmental works and service delivery across the district.

The DC, as per an official statement, took a detailed assessment of key health indicators, implementation of NHM programmes, functioning of health institutions and progress on infrastructure development projects.

On maternal and child healthcare, he directed officers concerned to ensure 100 percent institutional deliveries across the district, calling for enhanced field-level monitoring, awareness generation and timely referral mechanisms to achieve the objective.

Reviewing developmental

works, the DC directed executing agencies and health authorities to ensure timely completion of all ongoing projects, with strict adherence to prescribed standards and specifications.

He further directed health functionaries to strengthen patient care, ensure the availability of essential medicines and equipment, improve sanitation and hygiene standards in healthcare institutions and maintain a responsive healthcare delivery system.

The DC also reviewed the functioning of NHM programmes and sought updates on service delivery, human resource deployment and healthcare outcomes. Officers concerned briefed the Chair on achievements, challenges and measures being taken to improve healthcare services.

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner Malikzada

MLA, DC Shopian assess hailstorm damage

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JUNE 18: In the wake of the recent hailstorm that caused damage to orchards in several parts of the district, MLA Shopian, Shabir Ahmad Kullay, and Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Shishir Gupta, Thursday conducted an extensive tour of the affected areas to assess the ground situation and interact with farmers and orchardists.

MLA and Deputy Commissioner, Shopian toured the villages of Vedpora, Daramdora, Magalpora, Odhu, Chaigund, Dumpora, Dairoo and Nadigund and other areas where hailstorm-induced losses to horticultural produce were reported.

During the visit, detailed interactions with farmers were held where farmers flagged off their concerns

regarding the losses suffered due to the hailstorm.

The Duo expressed solidarity with the affected families and assured them that their genuine concerns would be projected before the government for appropriate relief and assistance.

Deputy Commissioner Shopian informed the affected residents that dedicated teams of the Horticulture Department have already been deployed to conduct a comprehensive damage assessment in all affected areas.

He said that the based on assessment reports, affected growers will be provided support and financial assistance admissible under the existing provisions for the losses.

ACR Shopian and officers from the Horticulture and Agriculture Departments accompanied them.

Sharma inaugurates Food Processing Lab, launches Int'l AI Conference at CUK

Reviews
arrangements
at Mata Kheer
Bhawani Shrine

KT News Desk

Ganderbal, Jun 18: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Science & Technology, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports, Satish Sharma on Thursday visited Ganderbal and participated in a series of programmes at the Green Campus and Tulmulla Campus of the Central University of Kashmir (CUK) besides reviewing arrangements at the revered Mata Kheer Bhawani Shrine ahead of the annual mela.

At the Green Campus, Duderhama, the Minister inaugurated the Food Processing Laboratory of the Design Innovation Centre in presence of Vice Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir, Professor A. Ravindranath, senior faculty members, researchers and students.



An exhibition showcasing millet-based products, including cookies and other value-added food items, was also organised. The Minister inspected the state-of-the-art laboratory facilities and was briefed about various food processing technologies, value addition mechanisms and research initiatives aimed at

promoting the sustainable agriculture and entrepreneurship. He examined advanced equipment including food pulpers and crushers for converting the fallen fruits into pulp, autoclave units for sterilization, dough sheeters, proofers, laminar air flow chambers and incubators. Emphasising the need to

bridge the gap between the scientific research and grassroots implementation, Satish Sharma called for taking innovations "from laboratory to land" so that farmers can directly benefit from scientific advancements. He stressed the importance of preserving the agricultural land and harnessing modern

technology to enhance the productivity, reduce wastage and generate sustainable livelihoods.

The Minister also visited the Design Innovation Centre where the students displayed a wide range of innovative products, prototypes and traditional artworks. Appreciating the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of the students, he directed the university authorities to explore mechanisms for commercialising the products developed by the young innovators. He also enquired about the process of assessing their market value and encouraged the university to facilitate market linkages for student innovations.

Lauding the efforts of students in preserving traditional crafts such as Namda, embroidery and Papier-Mâché, the Minister said Jammu and Kashmir possesses a rich cultural and artisanal heritage which must be protected and promoted. He underscored the importance of imparting practical skills to youth while encouraging the future generations to value traditional knowledge systems alongside modern technological advancements.

Later, at the Tulmulla Campus

of the Central University of Kashmir, the Minister inaugurated the maiden International Conference on Applied Artificial Intelligence.

Dean, School of Engineering, Professor Farooq Ahmad Mir, highlighted the significance of the conference in promoting research and innovation in emerging technologies.

Vice Chancellor Professor A. Ravindranath released the conference proceedings and souvenir in presence of distinguished academicians, scientists, researchers and delegates from within and outside the country.

Addressing the inaugural session, Satish Sharma expressed gratitude to the university for inviting him to the prestigious academic event and said it was a privilege to witness the growing research ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir. He emphasised that scientific progress must always be guided by ethics, morality and a commitment to public welfare.

Calling for a solution-oriented approach to emerging global challenges, the Minister said technological advancements, particularly in Artificial Intelligence, should ultimately serve humanity and improve the quality of life.

Highlighting the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence, the Minister urged the researchers and institutions to focus on developing AI-driven solutions in healthcare, mental health, agriculture, governance and public service delivery. At the same time, he stressed the importance of preserving indigenous knowledge systems and integrating traditional wisdom with modern scientific research.

Subsequently, the Minister visited the revered Mata Kheer Bhawani Shrine at Tulmulla, where he reviewed the arrangements being put in place for smooth conduct of the forthcoming annual mela. He inspected the facilities for devotees, interacted with the pilgrims and officials, performed puja and assessed the preparedness of various departments to ensure seamless arrangements.

During the visit, the Minister also met several public delegations who apprised him of various local issues and developmental concerns. He assured them that all genuine demands would be examined and addressed in a time-bound manner through coordinated efforts of the concerned departments.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

India emerging as

that India has witnessed transformative growth across sectors in the last 12 years. "Beyond economic growth, India's journey is about empowering people and transforming lives," he added.

He said that today's story of India is not just the story of economic progress. "It is also the story of social transformation," he said, adding that 25 crore people in the country have been lifted out of poverty in the last 12 years.

"Today's India and its youth are dreaming very big dreams. India's farmers are moving forward with new possibilities. India's women are demonstrating new leadership," he said.

"Fifty or a hundred years from today, when this era is reviewed, it will emerge that this era was driven by India's aspirations. Today's India is building the entire ecosystem of the future. India is investing in every sector that will shape the direction of the coming decades," he added.

Earlier, Modi was welcomed with the message "Bonjour Modi", or hello Modi, and chants of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai".

Mata Kheer Bhawani

Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister, Dheeraj Gupta; Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore; Senior Superintendent of Police Ganderbal, Sudhanshu Dhama and other officers.

Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore briefed the Chief Minister on the level of preparedness made for the smooth facilitation to the devotees vis-a-vis sanitation, drinking water supply, electricity, healthcare services, de-silting of Nallah, additional mobile toilets and other arrangements alongwith backup besides accommodation, and langar facilities.

While talking to reporters, CM Omar said devotees from across the country and various parts of the world are expected to participate in the mela to seek blessings of Mata Kheer Bhawani.

He said he visited the shrine not only in his capacity as Chief Minister but also as the local MLA to assess the arrangements on the ground. "Some issues were raised by priests and other stakeholders, and efforts will be made to address them before the mela begins," he said.

On the upcoming Amarnath Yatra, Omar noted that the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board has the primary responsibility for managing the pilgrimage, while the government is extending all necessary support to ensure its smooth conduct.

He expressed hope that pilgrims visiting Kheer Bhawani and the Amarnath shrine would be able to perform their religious duties comfortably, and prayed for peace and communal harmony in Jammu and Kashmir.

Responding to a question on irrigation concerns in parts of Ganderbal, the Chief Minister said reports of water scarcity had been received from some areas, and measures were being taken to ensure adequate supply through canals and irrigation channels.

He added that recent rainfall had helped ease the situation, and that Irrigation and Flood Control Minister Javed Rana would visit the affected areas along with officials to review the situation and take necessary measures.

On the construction of transit accommodation for Kashmiri Pandit employees in Pulwama, Omar said the facilities are meant for PM Package employees and are part of an ongoing initiative launched during the tenure of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. (KNO)

Lavender cultivation

infrastructure projects aimed at strengthening the medicinal and aromatic plants sector and improving farmers' livelihoods in the district.

The festival was attended by Minister for Agriculture Production and Rural Development, Javid Ahmad Dar; Advisor to the Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani; Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister, Dheeraj Gupta; Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore; Senior Superintendent of Police Ganderbal, Sudhanshu Dhama; senior officers of the Agriculture Production Department, scientists from SKUAST-Kashmir and other officials.

Addressing farmers, growers and members of the local community on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that lavender cultivation in recent times has added a new dimension to the Agriculture landscape of J&K. He highlighted the economic sustainability of lavender crop and impressed upon the farmers to adopt this crop on commercial lines. He stressed adopting this climate-resilient and high-value crop can safeguard farmers' incomes in the face of changing weather patterns.

He noted that lavender cultivation offers multiple benefits, including value addition through essential oil extraction, tourism potential and employment generation. He said in coming times lavender cultivation would be extended to newer areas of J&K, adding that the lavender festival would be a regular event in coming times.

Drawing parallels with internationally renowned lavender destinations, the Chief Minister said the scenic lavender fields of Ganderbal have the potential to attract visitors and nature enthusiasts, particularly those travelling to Sonamarg. He emphasized that such initiatives can create new sources of income for local communities while promoting rural tourism.

The Chief Minister also underlined the importance of reducing excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture. He said the government, in collaboration with agricultural institutions and experts, is working to promote sustainable farming practices and create awareness about the long-term benefits of preserving soil health.

Highlighting the government's efforts under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), Omar Abdullah said substantial investments are being made to modernize the agriculture sector through advanced infrastructure, mechanization, value-addition facilities and promotion of high-value crops.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for a Post-Harvest Infrastructure Project for Medicinal and Aromatic Plants at the Model Floriculture Centre, Nunar, being established under HADP/NABARD at a cost of 538.23 lakh.

The project includes development of an FPO Park with office and storage facilities, machinery for processing and e-marketing of medicinal and aromatic plant products, post-harvest management infrastructure, transportation facilities, establishment of a distillation unit, quality control laboratory, shade-net structures and other support facilities aimed at creating a comprehensive ecosystem for medicinal and aromatic plant cultivation and marketing.

The Chief Minister also reviewed infrastructure created at the centre under NABARD-funded projects, including development of a germplasm centre, strengthening of farm infrastructure, irrigation facilities, farm mechanization and establishment of essential oil distillation units.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister also distributed sanction letters among beneficiaries under various agriculture and allied sector initiatives. The beneficiaries received assistance for establishment of Hi-Tech Poly Houses, Common Facilitation Centres, dairy units and breed-based farms, besides keys of tractors provided under government-supported mechanization programmes aimed at enhancing farm productivity and improving rural livelihoods.

Addressing the farmers, the Chief Minister reiterated the government's commitment towards strengthening agriculture as a viable and profitable sector. He said efforts are being made to ensure that every region benefits from development initiatives and modern agricultural interventions.

Referring to ongoing road widening works in Ganderbal, Omar Abdullah acknowledged concerns raised by affected shopkeepers and assured them that their issues would be addressed in a fair and humane manner. He said the government would work towards a suitable rehabilitation mechanism in consultation with all stakeholders.

Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Javed Ahmad Dar while addressing the event underlined the

importance of HADP for the promotion of cultivation of crops like lavender. He said the department of Agriculture is working to explore Medicinal and aromatic crops (including lavender) cultivation for the socio-economic transformation of farming community of the region.

Advisor to the Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani, also addressed the gathering and highlighted the government's continued focus on strengthening the agriculture sector through infrastructure development, technological interventions and farmer-centric initiatives.

Farmers, Agri entrepreneurs, stakeholders and children from different schools also enthusiastically participated in the event.

Congratulating the people of Ganderbal on the successful organisation of the Lavender Festival, the Chief Minister expressed hope that the initiative would further strengthen the district's identity as a centre of agricultural innovation, floriculture and rural tourism.

Earlier, the Chief Minister inspected stalls showcasing lavender cultivation, essential oil extraction, value-added products and other innovations in the agriculture and floriculture sectors.

India hopes

importance of the safety and security of seafarers.

"He noted how hundreds of thousands of Indian seafarers essentially provide a global public good by serving on maritime platforms that serve the global community and serve global maritime trade in a big way, and why therefore their safety and security should be a common concern of the global community," Misri said.

"This is something that he voiced not just in his intervention at the G7 summit outreach meetings but also in his bilateral meetings with several leaders," he added.

Misri said India expects that the peace deal between the US and Iran will lead to sustained peace and stability in West Asia.

"India has always advocated the path of dialogue and diplomacy to settle conflicts such as these. We have always also expressed our readiness to contribute in any manner that we can," he said.

"We have very strong relationships with all of the countries in the region," he said.

Admin steps up

He said Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, who is also the chairman of the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB), has been continuously reviewing preparations related to pilgrim facilitation and security.

"Meetings are being held with service providers by the district administrations as well as at the divisional level. Our effort is to ensure that a maximum number of pilgrims undertake the yatra this year and receive the best possible services," he said.

Garg said all stakeholder departments, service providers and local residents were prepared to contribute towards the successful conduct of the pilgrimage.

As part of preparations, the Jammu administration has developed the Tawi Riverfront as a major on-the-spot registration and token centre for pilgrims.

Officials said the facility would help streamline registration procedures, improve crowd management and facilitate orderly movement of devotees. Similar registration and facilitation centres have also been established across Jammu city.

Preparations are also underway at the Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board's Yatri Niwas in Chanderkote in Ramban district, where authorities are strengthening infrastructure and facilities to accommodate pilgrims during the yatra.

Security agencies have simultaneously stepped up preparedness along the pilgrimage routes.

In Pulwama district, police, in coordination with the CRPF and other agencies, conducted comprehensive mock drills at multiple locations to assess operational readiness and strengthen security arrangements ahead of the pilgrimage.

The exercises were carried out along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway stretch

from Galander to Kandizal Crossing, as well as at Kakapora Railway Station and Ratnipora Railway Halt Station. Personnel from police, CRPF, specialised units, emergency response teams and medical services participated in the drills.

Officials said the exercises tested inter-agency coordination, communication systems, response mechanisms, area domination measures and contingency preparedness through simulated security and emergencies.

Meanwhile, security personnel intensified search and sanitisation operations at railway stations and other strategic locations. In south Kashmir's Kulgam district, police conducted extensive frisking and vehicle checks near the Navyug Tunnel in Qazigund, along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway.

Responding to a question on Muharram arrangements, the Divisional Commissioner said the administration had also initiated preparations for the observance and was coordinating with all stakeholders to ensure smooth conduct of processions.

He said Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had already reviewed the arrangements and directed officials to ensure availability of all essential services along approved procession routes.

"For the past few years, a system has been in place for Muharram processions. District administrations, in coordination with security agencies, are making arrangements at all approved routes," he said.

Garg added that field visits were underway and officials were preparing a final checklist of services in accordance with the chief minister's directions.

"Our effort is to ensure that Muharram processions are held smoothly during the tourist season so that there is no inconvenience either to participants or to tourists visiting Kashmir," he said.

Earlier, Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat on Thursday flagged off 45 specialised Mountain Rescue Teams deployed at 21 locations along the Amarnath Yatra routes and the cave shrine to strengthen emergency response during the pilgrimage.

Stressing the growing threat of cloudbursts and landslides in mountainous areas, he said the teams would play a crucial role in rescue operations.

Prabhat also highlighted the importance of training and lauded coordinated efforts by SDRF, police, BSF and SSB personnel.

The 38-day annual pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave shrine in south Kashmir is scheduled to commence on July 3 amid heightened security and elaborate logistical arrangements across Jammu and Kashmir. (KNO)

MeT warns

were reported in some areas and warned that similar conditions could occur in parts of North and Central Kashmir, including Tangdhar, Kupwara, Handwara, Budgam, Uri, Ganderbal, Shopian and Kokernag.

It also cautioned that intense rainfall at isolated places could trigger flash floods, waterlogging and mudslides, particularly in hilly and vulnerable areas of Tangdhar, Kupwara, Kukernag, Banihal and Kishtwar.

The fresh spell of rain brought a temporary relief from warm conditions in several areas, although authorities advised residents and travellers to remain cautious due to the possibility of sudden changes in weather.

The MeT Department has forecast generally cloudy weather across Jammu and Kashmir from June 19 to June 22, with one or two spells of light rain, brief intense showers, thunderstorms, lightning, hailstorms and gusty winds likely at many places.

Weather activity is expected to continue between June 23 and June 25, with partly to generally cloudy skies and light rain or brief showers at scattered locations across the Union Territory, the department said, adding that there is possibility of isolated hailstorms and intense showers during the next five days and urged people living in landslide-prone and flood-prone areas to remain alert.

As a precautionary measure, the MeT Centre advised people to stay away from loose structures, electric poles, wires and old trees during

thunderstorms. It also recommended suspension of boating and shikara operations on water bodies whenever strong winds, lightning or thunderstorms occur.

Farmers and orchard owners have been advised to undertake spraying operations during early morning hours when weather conditions are comparatively stable.

Officials said district administrations and disaster management agencies were monitoring the situation and would remain prepared to respond to any weather-related emergency in vulnerable areas. (KNO)

Choose moderation

the health concerns highlighted are: obesity and weight gain, resulting from excess calorie intake, type 2 diabetes, due to repeated spikes in blood glucose levels, fatty liver disease, linked to excessive consumption of sugary beverages, heart disease, as high levels of saturated fats, sodium, and cholesterol increase cardiovascular risk and metabolic syndrome, a cluster of conditions including high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar, and abnormal cholesterol levels.

The advisory further notes that sugary drinks provide "empty calories" and often fail to create a feeling of fullness, encouraging people to consume more food than required.

Rather than discouraging the consumption of Wazwan, health experts are advocating balanced eating habits and healthier beverage choices.

Among the recommendations are: drinking water before and during meals, limiting portion sizes and eating mindfully, choosing fresh fruits instead of sugary desserts and beverages. Opting for traditional drinks such as Kahwah, mint water, and lemon water without added sugar, remaining physically active and taking a short walk after meals to aid digestion and energy expenditure.

The advisory stresses that Wazwan should be viewed as a celebratory meal rather than an everyday dietary practice.

"Wazwan is a celebration, not an everyday meal. Enjoy our heritage, protect your health, and choose moderation," the advisory states, emphasising that awareness and balanced consumption can help people enjoy Kashmir's culinary traditions while reducing the risk of lifestyle-related diseases.

Health professionals say that informed dietary choices, portion control, and regular physical activity remain key to preventing obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other chronic illnesses increasingly affecting people across the region. (KNO)

Preparedness, training

training, effective disaster response requires coordinated preparation and seamless cooperation among all agencies.

"No matter how good the training of individual forces is, unless we train together for interoperability, we cannot achieve the goal of jointness and jointmanship," he said.

DGP Prabhat also congratulated the SDRF team for conducting a joint training capsule aimed at improving interoperability and coordinated deployment during rescue missions, terming it a first-of-its-kind initiative.

Describing NDRF as the "flag bearer" of disaster management in the country, the DGP said other agencies should learn from its standards of training, equipment and preparedness. "We would like to learn best practices from NDRF and adopt them to further strengthen our response mechanism," he said.

Expressing confidence ahead of the forthcoming Amarnath Yatra, the DGP said, "I expect all participating agencies to maintain the same high standards of professionalism and performance demonstrated in previous rescue operations." (KNO)

Northern Army

Southern Route ahead of the commencement of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra 2026.

"Indian Army is committed to ensuring a safe pilgrimage for all devotees through seamless coordination with all stakeholders, vigilant security measures and comprehensive preparedness," it said. (KNO)

Modi, Trump direct officials to fast-track 'commercially meaningful' trade Pact

PTI

Evian-Les-Bains (France), Jun 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump directed their officials to work towards a balanced, mutually beneficial and commercially meaningful trade agreement at the earliest.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said this on Thursday, a day after the two leaders held wide-ranging talks for the first time in 16 months on the margins of the G7 Summit in an attempt to rebuild the strained bilateral ties.

US Trade Representative, Jamieson Greer, will be visiting India next week to take forward the talks on the proposed trade deal.

In the meeting, Modi and Trump reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and advancing cooperation across all domains for the mutual benefit of the two countries and their peoples, the MEA said.

"The leaders noted with particular satisfaction the significant progress made in negotiations towards an interim bilateral trade agreement and instructed their officials to work



towards a balanced, mutually beneficial, and commercially meaningful agreement at the earliest," it said in a statement.

The two sides have already held a series of negotiations on the proposed trade deal.

In his remarks, Modi also referred to the last time he met with Trump in Washington DC in February last year and said it brought new energy to the relationship.

The prime minister also complimented Trump for his efforts to bring peace to West Asia.

"Prime Minister Modi commended President Trump for his efforts that had resulted in an understanding to end the ongoing conflict in West Asia and restore peace and stability across the broader region," the MEA said.

It said he also underlined the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation and unimpeded commerce in the Strait of Hormuz and the need to ensure the safety of seafarers.

The Modi-Trump meeting came amid increasing outrage

in India over the killing of three Indian crew members of a merchant ship in American military strikes in the Gulf of Oman.

"The two leaders reviewed the substantial progress achieved under the India-US COMPACT (Catalysing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology) since their meeting in Washington, DC in February 2025," the MEA said.

"They welcomed key developments across the defence, strategic technologies, energy,

and bilateral trade sectors," it added.

The COMPACT initiative is aimed at driving transformative change across key pillars of cooperation.

The relations witnessed a major downturn after Washington imposed punitive tariffs on India last year, and President Trump made assertions regarding his role in de-escalating the India-Pakistan military clashes of May 2025 that drew sharp reaction from Indian officials.

Over the next few months, the US president repeatedly and publicly claimed that he had resolved the military conflict between the two neighbours and saved millions of lives as it was heading toward a full-scale war. New Delhi stoutly maintained that the cessation of the hostilities was a result of talks between India and Pakistan; the US involvement had nothing to do with it.

Washington's new immigration policy and its decision to increase the H1B visa fee also contributed to the slide in India-US ties.

However, both sides made efforts in the last few months to repair the ties and even moved forward to firm up the trade deal soon.

Hajj 2026 best in India's history; will announce new Hajj policy soon: Rijiju



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 18: Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday called the recently-concluded Hajj 2026 the best in India's history, saying a large number of pilgrims thanked the government for the arrangements.

Rijiju held a review meeting for Hajj 2027 and announced that the government will unveil a new Hajj policy in the coming days.

The minister also informed that the entire Hajj process is being integrated with AI applications.

"This year's Hajj was the best in India's history. Thousands of pilgrims have written to us and thanked the government. India has received two awards because of this excellent Hajj," Rijiju said at a press conference here.

"The feedback from the 1.75 lakh pilgrims was positive... everything was executed on time. A 'Short Duration Hajj' was introduced for the first time,

with a dedicated quota of 10,000 slots. Many people met me, and thousands of messages were received praising the magnificent management of Hajj 2026. The pilgrims expressed their gratitude to the Government of India," the minister said.

While the traditional Hajj duration is 40-45 days, the government introduced the 'Short Duration Hajj' to accommodate working professionals and the elderly, reducing the total duration to between 15 and 20 days, Rijiju said.

"We have begun preparations for Hajj 2027. We will announce the new Hajj policy in a few days," he said.

Highlighting the initiative to integrate the Hajj process with AI applications, he stated, "Our ministry has implemented a major change. We are introducing AI applications. AI will be utilised for the entire process, from accepting applications to the final completion of the pilgrimage."

PM to transfer PM-KISAN instalment worth Rs 18,880 cr to 9.44 cr farmers tomorrow

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on June 20 transfer the 23rd instalment under the PM-KISAN scheme from West Bengal, disbursing Rs 18,880 crore directly to over 9.44 crore farmer beneficiaries across the country.

The transfer will take place during his visit to Tarakeswar in Hooghly district of the eastern state.

In West Bengal alone, more than 45.35 lakh farmers will receive instalments totalling approximately Rs 907

crore, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said. With this, the cumulative disbursement under the scheme in the state will cross Rs 15,055 crore, while the national total since the scheme's launch in 2019 will surpass Rs 4.46 lakh crore, he said in a statement.

Chouhan said the funds would be routed through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), "strengthening the income security of small and marginal farmers".

Modi will also launch the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) and the Restructured Weather-Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS) in

West Bengal, with a combined outlay of approximately Rs 12,200 crore, he said in a statement.

The government aims to extend crop insurance coverage to about 1.10 crore farmers across 30 lakh hectares during 2026-27, covering crops valued at around Rs 28,140 crore.

Under the Digital Agriculture Mission, the Prime Minister will launch an Agri-Tech platform in the state, offering an integrated interface for fertiliser distribution, Kisan Credit Cards, DBT services, and MSP-based government procurement.

Pradhan reviews preparedness for NEET-UG re-exam

Stresses integrity, transparency



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 18: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan chaired a high-level review meeting on Thursday with senior officials from the Ministry of Education, state governments, the National Testing Agency (NTA) and higher education institutions to assess preparedness for the NEET-UG re-examination scheduled for June 21.

The NEET-UG for admissions into medical courses took place on May 3 this year but the NTA cancelled it on May 12 amid allegations of a paper leak. The CBI is currently investigating

this matter.

Addressing the meeting, Pradhan emphasised the importance of maintaining the "highest standards of integrity, transparency and efficiency" in the examination process and directed all concerned authorities to remain vigilant and fully prepared for the free and fair conduct of the re-examination.

The minister said officers designated by the ministry would reach all states to coordinate activities related to the re-examination process and report to the command centre headed by the NTA Director General. Pradhan also asked designated nodal officers of

state governments to ensure that students were provided all necessary facilities to enable them to appear for the re-examination in a stress-free environment.

School Education and Literacy Secretary Sanjay Kumar, Higher Education Secretary Vineet Joshi and NTA Director General Abhishek Singh, among others, attended the meeting. Kumar requested the state governments' nodal officers to ensure they took adequate steps in this regard. Joshi said the time between now and the re-examination date was crucial and stressed the need for proactive coordination, timely dissemination of instructions and strict compliance with all prescribed protocols.

The NTA Director General said the NTA is working with all concerned stakeholders, including the district-level coordination committees headed by the District Magistrates, state police departments and intelligence agencies, to ensure the re-examination is conducted smoothly.

Centre justifies action against Telegram in Delhi HC

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 18: The Centre on Thursday justified in the Delhi High Court the action to temporarily restrict access to the Telegram app ahead of June 21 NEET-UG re-examination, arguing that the messaging app offers bot infrastructure that could be used to disseminate information in bulk.

On May 12, the National Testing Agency (NTA) had cancelled the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET-UG, held on May 3 for medical admissions amid allegations of paper leak. The matter is currently under investigation by the CBI.

A vacation bench of Justice Tejas Karia is hearing the Telegram app's plea against the decision to restrict its access prior to the NEET-UG retest.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, stated that a single Telegram account can create up to 40 bots.

Gold slides Rs 960 to Rs 1.53 lakh/10 g; silver sinks Rs 6,660

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 18: Gold prices fell for the third straight session, sliding by Rs 960 to Rs 1.53 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday, while silver slumped by Rs 6,660 as the precious metals lost their safe-haven appeal amid a rally in stock markets. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity declined by Rs 960 to Rs 1,53,440 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Wednesday's closing level of Rs 1,54,400 per 10 grams.

Silver also witnessed heavy selling pressure, plunging by Rs 6,660 to Rs 2,48,740 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). The white metal had settled at Rs 2,55,400 per kg in the preceding session.

Analysts said the decline came as domestic equities remained firm and the rupee appreciated against the US dollar, prompting investors to rotate away from bullion despite a modest rebound in global precious metal prices.

Market participants also



assessed the implications of the US Federal Reserve's latest policy decision and comments from new Fed Chair Kevin Warsh. "Gold prices witnessed sharp weakness following the Federal Reserve policy announcement, as comments from new Fed Chair Kevin Warsh suggested the possibility of one interest rate hike in 2026, if the US economy continues to remain resilient," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

The Fed's assessment of steady economic growth and a healthy labour market strengthened the dollar and weighed on bullion prices, he

added. Globally, spot gold rose marginally at USD 4,266.47 per ounce, while silver went up by 0.38 per cent to USD 68.17 per ounce after US President Donald Trump and his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian digitally signed the memorandum of understanding aimed to end hostilities and create a framework for negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme.

"Progress toward an interim peace agreement between the United States and Iran has helped ease geopolitical risks and inflation concerns, providing some support to bullion," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Centre proposes unique coding, digital mapping of every village road

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 18: The Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj has proposed a nationwide system to assign a unique code, digital identity and standardised classification to every road within villages, aiming to improve governance, service delivery, emergency response, and rural infrastructure planning, according to official sources.

The proposed Intra-Village Road Coding and Grading System, which will soon be shared in the public domain for feedback, seeks to create a standardised

framework for naming, coding and digitally mapping all internal village roads across the country, sources said.

Officials said while India has developed an extensive rural road network under schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), internal roads and lanes within villages have largely remained undocumented, creating difficulties for ambulances, postal services, government agencies and navigation platforms.

Under the proposed framework, roads inside villages will be categorised into three classes

-- Main Roads, Cross Roads, and Other or Connected Roads. Each road will be assigned a unique alphanumeric code linked to its location from state level to village level, sources said.

The coding structure has been designed to be compatible with existing Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) road codification standards and Local Government Directory (LGD) databases, while duplicate codes will be prevented through validation on PMGSY's Online Management, Monitoring and Accounting System (OMMS), they said.

India to allow import of 3.78 lakh UK cars at concessional duty in first 15 years of trade pact

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 18: India will allow the import of 3.78 lakh units of conventional-engine passenger cars, including those in the mass segment, from the UK at concessional customs duty during the first 15 years of the implementation of the trade pact between the two countries.

Under the pact, tariffs on automotive imports will fall from about 110 per cent to 10 per cent, with quotas on both sides. According to the



India-UK CETA document, released on Wednesday, India will get access to the UK's electric, hybrid/hydrogen passenger cars segment

with duty-free exports to that country from the sixth year in the price segment ranging from GBP 20,000 to GBP 80,000, with the total

quota reaching a peak of 88,000 units from the 15th year and continuing in the subsequent years.

This will benefit Indian manufacturers such as Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Mahindra & Mahindra, and Maruti Suzuki, among others.

Commenting on the pact, Rahul Bharti, Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Affairs, Maruti Suzuki, said: "We believe India has the competitiveness to welcome liberalisation and use it for export opportunities."

Modi meets leading CEOs in France; discusses investments in India

PTI

Paris, Jun 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday met leading business executives here and held discussions on investment opportunities and expansion plans in India.

The discussions with the CEOs of the French companies focused on strengthening cooperation across sectors ranging from shipping and logistics to railways, construction and artificial intelligence, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Modi is currently in France, where he participated in the G7 Summit over the last two days and held talks with several world leaders, including US President Donald Trump.

Among those who met the prime minister in Paris on Thursday was Rodolphe Saade, Chairman and CEO of CMA CGM, with discussions focusing on maritime shipping, logistics and global supply chains.

"We had global discussions on development that we could eventually implement in India. We discussed shipbuilding, ship recycling, deep sea ports as well as building containers," Saade told



PTI after meeting Modi.

He further said: "I see great potential for France and India to continue cooperating and setting up new partnerships. As far as we are concerned, we view (the) relationship with our Indian partners very good and I believe that we can do more in the field of shipping and logistics."

"I believe that India has a major role to play in the supply chains of the world. The fact that we are now in a position to build container ships in India is definitely a good step forward. The future of India is happening now," he added.

According to the MEA, Modi noted the group's "strong and growing presence in India". The

MEA said in a post on X that Saade highlighted CMA CGM's plans for India, including "ongoing investments, expansion plans and initiatives that are leading to skill development, shipbuilding, expansion in logistics and innovation in supply chain".

Modi also met Benoit Bazin, Chairman and CEO of Saint-Gobain, and discussed opportunities in the materials and construction sector, with a particular emphasis on sustainability.

The prime minister noted Saint-Gobain's "strong presence and investments in India, which are creating opportunities for Indian youth", the MEA said.

Bazin shared Saint-Gobain's plans for "further investments and expansion in India", according to the ministry.

Modi separately met Martin Sion, CEO of Alstom, and discussed opportunities in mobility and railway modernisation.

The prime minister noted Alstom's "significant investments and manufacturing presence in India, which are contributing to job creation and the growth of India's rail sector", the MEA said.

Sion shared Alstom's plans for "further expansion and investments in India".

Modi also met Arthur Mensch, co-founder and CEO of Mistral AI, and highlighted opportunities in India's "growing AI ecosystem".

Mensch expressed Mistral AI's "strong interest in collaborating with India and partnering with Indian companies to drive innovation and expand AI capabilities", the MEA said.

In Paris, Modi is also scheduled to attend VivaTech 2026 - Europe's premier technology and innovation event - alongside French President Emmanuel Macron and interact with the Indian community.

Iran says missile program not part of talks with US

AFP

Tehran, Jun 18: Iran said on Thursday that its missile program would not be part of future negotiations with the United States, after the two sides agreed a framework deal for ending their war.

US President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signed a memorandum of understanding early Thursday, ending a regional war that erupted on February 28 with US-Israeli strikes.

The agreement lays the groundwork for detailed negotiations on Iran's nuclear program and sanctions relief for Tehran.

There is no mention in the deal of Iran's missile program, a longstanding concern for Washington and its ally Israel.

"Our missiles do not like at all to be talked about by anyone," foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said in an interview with Iranian state television.

"Iranian missiles are only for firing, not for negotiations. Iran's defense capability will not be discussed in any way, in any process or with any party."

During the nearly 40-day war, Iran's missile infrastructure came under heavy US-Israeli bombardment, but Tehran continued to respond with missile and drone attacks



across the region.

Before the war, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio had warned that Iran would need to negotiate over its ballistic missile arsenal, which Washington views as a threat to Israel and US military bases in the region.

Iran has repeatedly refused to discuss what it describes as its defensive capabilities. On

Wednesday, Trump appeared to soften his position, saying it would be "unfair" for Iran not to have missiles. "I'm saying that if other countries have them, it's a little bit unfair for them not to have some," Trump said.

"A ballistic missile is not the same thing as what we are talking about when we talk nuclear."

India storm into final of World Team Snooker Championship



PTI

Guangdong (China), Jun 18: Dominant India outclassed defending champions Hong Kong China 3-1 to storm into the final of the World Team Snooker Championship here on Thursday.

In the title clash on Saturday morning, India, who won the championship seven years ago in Myanmar, will take on the winners of the other semifinal between hosts China 'A' and Korea.

Despite a few hiccups in the doubles match, both Pankaj Advani and Aditya Mehta were largely on top of their game.

In fact, the Indians could have won in straight frames but frittered away the advantage.

Advani was in excellent form after the early safety skirmishes. Latching onto a missed red by Cheung Ka Wai, the Indian ace constructed a gritty break of 48.

He was forced to play around the blue, as the pink was on the yellow spot and the black was blocked by a few reds.

Advani resorted to safety after losing position, snookering his rival behind the pink in the 'D'.

After three failed attempts, Ka Wai hit the object ball, but the first rubber was already decided.

Capitalising on Wang Yuchen's poor safety, Mehta rifled in a frame-clinching break of 67.

With just three reds on the table and needing two snookers to stay in the match, the Hong Kong cueist conceded after missing a pink to the centre pocket.

The Indian duo then let the reigning champions into the match, losing from a position of strength. Advani and Mehta's clever safety play had their rivals in trouble early on, but from 25-53 down, Yuchen snookered Advani a few times behind the green to pull one back, winning the third rubber 68-59. Recharged after a short break, Advani compiled a silken-smooth break of 74 after Yuchen missed a red, taking India into the final.

Results: Semifinals: India bt Hong Kong China 3-1 (Pankaj Advani bt Cheung Ka Wai 74-1; Aditya Mehta bt Wang Yuchen 67 (67) -9; Advani/ Mehta lost to Yuchen/ Wan Nansen Sin Man 59-68; Advani bt Yuchen 88 (74) -0).

Sports Ministry sanctions Rs 6 cr grant for conduct of Asian Fencing Championships



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 18: The Sports Ministry has sanctioned a grant of Rs six crore for the organisation of the 26th Asian Fencing Championships, which will double up as qualifiers for the Asian Games to be held in September-October in Japan.

The event that will run from June 19 to 24 is the first competitive sporting event that will be held at the Bharat Mandapam complex of Pragati Maidan here.

Bharat Mandapam was previously

reserved strictly for high-profile diplomatic and political summits like the G20.

The venue will accommodate an international field of more than 400 athletes from over 30 countries. "Hosting a tournament of this magnitude is a monumental milestone for Indian fencing," stated star fencer CA Bhavani Devi, set to compete in the women's sabre event. The Fencing Association of India (FAI) has named a 24-strong national contingent, evenly split with 12 male and 12 female athletes.

World shares are mixed following signing of US-Iran deal on ending war

AP

Bangkok, Jun 18: World shares were mixed on Thursday, with benchmarks in Japan and South Korea setting fresh records, after the US and Iran signed their initial agreement ending the war.

The rally in Asia followed a retreat Wednesday on Wall Street driven by speculation the Federal Reserve may raise interest rates this year to curb inflation. US futures were higher early Thursday, while oil prices fell.

Leaders from the US and Iran signed the deal on a permanent end to hostilities that starts a 60-day negotiating clock to reach a final deal on the future of Iran's nuclear program. In the meantime, it calls for Tehran to dilute its stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

The deal waives US-backed sanctions on the country, immediately allowing Iran to sell its oil freely in a major concession from Washington, according to details released



by both countries.

The news came after US markets closed with losses for the day. In early European trading, Germany's DAX edged 0.2 per cent higher to 24,987.35, while the CAC 40 in Paris edged 0.1 per cent lower, to 8,424.47. Britain's FTSE 100 shed 0.8 per cent to 10,422.40.

The future for the S&P 500 was up 0.9 per cent, while that for the Dow Jones Industrial

Average gained 0.6 per cent.

During Asian trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 resumed its climb, gaining 1.7 per cent to a new closing high of 71,053.49. It topped 70,000 for the first time this week and is still gaining thanks to hopes for an end to the war and strong buying of high-tech shares due to the artificial intelligence boom.

"This is very broad-based rally, I believe it's actually

showing some confidence that the Japanese economy is going to recover further from the ... the end of the war, and presumably the oil prices in the near future," said Neil Newman, head of strategy at Astris Advisory Japan.

South Korea likewise has been setting records, gaining 2.3 per cent to 9,063.84. The Kospi has roughly tripled in the past year, helped by gains for computer chipmakers Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix. Samsung's shares rose 4.6 per cent and those of SK Hynix gained 6.5 per cent.

Taiwan's Taixi jumped 1.3 per cent. In Hong Kong, the Hang Seng lost 2.1 per cent to 23,792.35, while the Shanghai Composite index edged 0.4 per cent lower to 4,090.48.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 slipped 0.6 per cent to 8,911.10. On Wednesday, the S&P 500 slumped 1.2 per cent after the Fed released projections showing nearly half its policymakers foresee at least one increase to its main interest rate in 2026.

Most-capped Manpreet credits longevity to fitness, idolises King Kohli

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 18: India's most-capped hockey player Manpreet Singh idolises Virat Kohli and credits his longevity to fitness, saying he has drawn inspiration from the star cricketer's fitness regime. Manpreet on Wednesday surpassed former captain and Hockey India chief Dilip Tirkey (412 international appearances) to achieve the milestone.

At 413 caps, Manpreet is fifth on the all-time list and the only active player among the top five.

"Everyone knows that Virat is a fitness freak," the 33-year-old Manpreet said in an online interaction from Rotterdam in the ongoing European leg of the FIH Pro League.

"Just not for me, for every athlete he is an idol, everyone learns from him how to remain fit. He is 36 but he has maintained his fitness very well.

"I have also learnt a lot of things from him (Kohli). The way he remains



aggressive on the ground, focussed, gives his 100 percent. He is a (Cristiano) Ronaldo fan and I am also a Ronaldo fan, that's common between us. It's inspiring for me and all.

"He is a vegan and what he eats and what not, every athlete follows."

Manpreet, who led India to a historic bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics after 41 years, said it is the hunger to don the National colours for long that drove him towards fitness.

"The hunger to represent India drove me

towards fitness which is the reason behind my longevity. I want to maintain my fitness and prolong my career. In hockey you need to be fit because if you are not fit you can't survive in world level hockey," he said. "That's why I give personal attention to my fitness because with age I have to increase my fitness level. If I am not fit I can't make my position for granted. Whenever I am on break or camps, I continue my fitness routine," he added.

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