



Jyeshtha Ashtami: Emotional reunions, communal harmony mark Kheer Bhawani Mela

- » Thousands throng Tulmulla shrine, pray for peace
- » Muslims greet visiting Kashmiri Pandits, recall past memories
- » Elaborate security, healthcare, transport arrangements in place
- » Div Com Garg, IGP Birdi extend greetings to devotees
- » Pilgrims praise administration for smooth conduct of mela

Raja Syed Rather

Ganderbal, Jun 22: Thousands of devotees gathered at the Mata Kheer Bhawani shrine at Tulmulla in Ganderbal on Monday to celebrate Jyeshtha Ashtami offering prayers for peace, prosperity, and communal harmony in Jammu and Kashmir and across the world.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) devotees began arriving at the shrine from the early hours of the day to offer prayers and seek blessings of Mata Kheer Bhawani. The temple complex witnessed a large turnout amid an atmosphere of devotion and spiritual fervour.

Pertinently, the event is one of the most important religious festivals of the Kashmiri Pandit community. The festival marks the appearance day of Goddess Ragnya Bhagwati. It is celebrated at several shrines dedicated to the deity across



Pic: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

Kashmir, including Kheer Bhawani at Tulmulla, Tripur Sundari at Devsar, Ragnya Bhagwati at Manzgam, Loktipora and Tikker.

Talking to KNO a devotee, Ashish Nand Bhatt, expressed pride in his Kashmiri heritage

and said his ancestors had served as priests at the holy Amarnath Cave Shrine. He said he had come to seek the blessings of Mata Kheer Bhawani and pray for peace and prosperity.

The shrine complex

remained packed throughout the day as devotees offered prayers, lit earthen lamps and chanted hymns in praise of the Goddess. Long queues were witnessed outside the temple, the yagya shala and community | More on P6

LG Sinha prays for peace, prosperity, well-being of all

Pays obeisance at Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple; interacts with Kashmiri Pandit devotees

Raja Syed Rather

Ganderbal, Jun 22: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday prayed for peace, prosperity and well-being of all at the revered Mata Kheer Bhawani Temple at Tulmulla in Ganderbal on the auspicious occasion of Jyeshtha Ashtami.

Talking to reporters after paying obeisance at the revered shrine, here in Central Kashmir, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Today, I prayed for the well-being, peace and



prosperity of all. May the blessings of Mata Kheer Bhawani be upon everyone. This year, the number of devotees visiting the holy shrine is higher compared to | More on P6

'We're incomplete without each other': KPs seek return to homeland

Waris Fayaz

Kupwara, Jun 22: The annual Kheer Bhawani festival in north Kashmir's frontier Kupwara district on Monday became a platform for Kashmiri Pandits to voice their longing for a return to their homeland. Many devotees urged the | More on P6

'This is Kashmir our mother told us about': Two sisters break down at Tulmulla



Raja Syed Rather

Ganderbal, Jun 22: The moment two Kashmiri Pandit sisters, now settled outside the Valley, stepped inside the revered Kheer Bhawani shrine at Tulmulla Gandarbal, words deserted them. Instead, there were tears. Standing beside the sacred spring, one sister from the | More on P6

'Kheer Bhawani Mela symbol of Kashmir's heritage'

Farooq, Sharma, Koul, Mufti visit Mata Kheer Bhawani Shrine

Raja Syed Rather

Ganderbal, Jun 22: National Conference President, Dr Farooq Abdullah, Member

Parliament Sat Sharma (CA), BJP J&K President, along with BJP General Secretary (Organisation) Ashok Koul and Peoples Democratic Party chief Mehbooba Mufti visited the revered Mata Kheer Bhawani Shrine at Tulmulla in Ganderbal on Monday on the occasion | More on P6



Rain, hailstorm lash Kashmir, inundate Sgr parts

Temps decline, MeT forecasts dry weather till June 26

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 22: Heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms and hailstorm lashed several parts of Kashmir on Monday, causing waterlogging in many areas of Srinagar and bringing a noticeable drop in daytime temperatures across the Valley.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) many parts of the Valley witnessed rain and thundershowers during the afternoon, while several areas of Jammu division, including Ramban, Doda, Kishtwar, Poonch, Rajouri, Reasi and Udhampur districts, also received precipitation.

The weather activity was accompanied by brief intense showers, thunderstorms, hailstorm and gusty winds at several places, including along the Sonamarg-Baltal-Holy Cave and Pahalgam-Holy Cave routes, officials said.

The heavy downpour led to waterlogging in several localities of Srinagar, particularly in low-lying areas of the old city, where roads and lanes were inundated following the accumulation of rainwater. Traffic movement was affected at some places as drains struggled to cope with the sudden spell of rain.

Residents in parts of Srinagar and south Kashmir's Anantnag district also reported | More on P6

Amar Ujala Medhavi Chhatra Samman Samaroh Carry your brilliance with humility: LG Sinha to students

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 22: Calling students as the makers of our future, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday urged them to carry their brilliance with humility, courage with compassion, and ambition with responsibility.

Addressing the felicitation ceremony of the brilliant students of class 10th and 12th during Amar Ujala Medhavi Chhatra Samman Samaroh here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Always remember that your success will be judged by what you have contributed not just for yourself, but for others. The honor you receive today recognizes academic excellence, but the true reward will be the lives



you touch in the years to come. Your prize will be visible in the communities you lift and strengthen."

"I see in all of you the builders of tomorrow. You will choose different fields in future. Some will be scientists who innovate, some engineers who improve infrastructure and design sustainable cities, some artists

who reshape society through their vision. Above all, I see responsible citizens who will carry forward the values of compassion, empathy, and justice," the Lieutenant Governor told the students.

LG Sinha also honored the educators who have made immense contributions. He emphasised on the change required in | More on P6

Safety of Amarnath pilgrims top priority: DGP Prabhat

Directs security agencies to maintain robust anti-terror grid

NH-44 movement to remain regulated during Yatra

Commuters advised to follow cut-off timings, restrictions

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 22: Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat on Monday reviewed security arrangements for the upcoming Amarnath Yatra and directed all security agencies to strengthen coordination, intelligence-sharing and surveillance to ensure the safe and smooth conduct of the annual pilgrimage.

Chairing a high-level security review meeting in South Kashmir, DGP Prabhat,



according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) assessed the prevailing security situation and preparedness for the forthcoming Amarnath Yatra 2026, scheduled to commence on July 3.

Senior officers of the Army's Victor Force, CRPF, BSF, ITBP and Jammu and Kashmir Police attended the meeting. Senior Superintendents of Police from South Kashmir districts also briefed the DGP on the security scenario, anti-terror operations, area domination plans and arrangements being put in place for the yatra.

The officers informed the meeting about | More on P6

Every lost hour of sleep damages brain, heart, immunity: GMC Sgr expert Dr S. Muhammad Salim Khan says sleep is biological necessity, not luxury

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jun 22: Stressing that sleep is a biological necessity rather than a luxury, a leading public health expert from Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar has urged people to prioritise adequate and timely sleep, warning that chronic sleep deprivation can have far-reaching consequences on physical health, mental wellbeing, and overall quality of life.

In a public health awareness message, Dr S. Muhammad Salim Khan, Professor, Department of Community Medicine, GMC Srinagar, described adequate sleep as the body's most powerful natural

medicine, emphasising that every hour of lost sleep ultimately affects the brain, heart, metabolism, immune system, and emotional health.

According to the advisory, accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), adults between 18 and 64 years of age require 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night, while older adults aged 65 years and above should aim for 7 to 8 hours of sleep daily. Consistently sleeping for less than six hours has been linked to a wide range of adverse health outcomes.

The advisory notes that human beings are biologically programmed to sleep during the night. Habitually staying



awake beyond midnight disrupts the body's natural circadian rhythm, which is regulated by the brain's suprachiasmatic nucleus. Such disruption can negatively

affect hormonal balance, metabolism, mood, and overall health.

Dr Khan said that sleep plays a crucial role in regulating important neurotransmitters

and hormones, including melatonin, serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin, catecholamines, and GABA. "Healthy sleep patterns promote emotional stability, stronger immunity, improved concentration, motivation, empathy, and cardiovascular health. Conversely, inadequate sleep can lead to irritability, anxiety, depression, impaired judgment, reduced productivity, social withdrawal, and heightened stress responses," he said.

The advisory further outlines the widespread effects of sleep deprivation on various organs and body systems. Lack of sleep can impair memory, attention, learning ability, and | More on P6

Repeated hailstorms ravage orchards, crops; farmers seek relief

Growers reiterate implementation of crop insurance scheme

Jahangeer Ganaie

Fresh hailstorms accompanied by heavy rainfall lashed several parts of south Kashmir on Monday, causing extensive damage to apple orchards, vegetable crops, and other standing agricultural fields. This has further deepened concerns among farmers already reeling from repeated | More on P6

Ministry of Panchayati Raj to hold Regional Governance Workshop today in Srinagar

KT News Desk

New Delhi, 22 June: The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) is organising a Regional Workshop titled Seva Se Samridhhi: Panchayat-led Service Delivery at Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir on 23rd June 2026.

The workshop, as per a PIB statement, will be inaugurated by Shri Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Shri Javid Ahmad Dar, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Government of Jammu and Kashmir; Vivek Bharadwaj, Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj; Palka Sahni, Joint Secretary, MoPR; and Mohammad Aijaz Asad, Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Jammu and Kashmir, will also be present on the occasion.

The workshop is being held in collaboration with the Common Services Centre Special Purpose Vehicle (CSC-SPV), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Government of Jammu and Kashmir. It forms part of a sustained series of initiatives undertaken by the Ministry to facilitate improved service delivery and strengthen Ease of Living in Grameen Bharat through empowered, accountable, and responsive Panchayati Raj Institutions and



Rural Local Bodies. The workshop will bring together Panchayat functionaries, elected representatives, and Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), along with State Government officials from seven States: Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh. Representatives from civil society organisations, academic and research institutions, and organisations working in rural technology and digital public infrastructure will also participate, contributing diverse perspectives on last-mile governance and service delivery. As part of

the workshop, high-performing Gram Panchayats and outstanding Common Service Centres (CSCs) from the participating States will be recognized and felicitated. Deliberations will focus on strengthening Panchayat-led service delivery through digital transformation, citizen participation, innovation, and improved accessibility of public services at the grassroots. Panel discussions, technical sessions, and State-level experience-sharing sessions will provide a structured platform for inter-State knowledge exchange and the dissemination of scalable governance models.

Khet Bachao Abhiyan awareness programme held in Shopian

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JUNE 22: As part of the month long national flagship campaign "Khet Bachao Abhiyan", the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shopian Monday organized a one day awareness programme at KKG, Keller, Shopian.

The programme, as per an official statement, witnessed enthusiastic participation from more than 100 farmers, along with Krishi Udyamis from the Keller area.

The awareness programme was organized with the objective of promoting soil conservation, sustainable agricultural practices and creating awareness among farmers regarding the scientific management and efficient utilization of agricultural land and soil resources.

During the programme, experts highlighted the importance of maintaining soil health for enhancing crop productivity, ensuring environmental sustainability and securing long term agricultural growth.

Speaking on the occasion, Ravinder Kumar, Agri



Chemist, who was the Chief Guest, emphasized the crucial role of soil as the foundation of agriculture and stressed the need for regular soil testing, balanced use of fertilizers and adoption of scientific farming practices.

He urged farmers to make optimum use of

available agricultural resources and adopt modern technologies for improving crop productivity while preserving soil fertility.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Agriculture Officer Shopian, Mohd Rafiq highlighted the significance of the ongoing

Khet Bachao Abhiyan and informed the participants that the month long campaign is being conducted across the district to promote awareness regarding soil conservation and sustainable agriculture.

He encouraged farmers to actively participate in departmental programmes and avail themselves of the various schemes and services being provided by the department for agricultural development.

The participants were also sensitized about soil health management, judicious use of fertilizers, crop planning and other scientific interventions aimed at increasing agricultural productivity while protecting natural resources.

Among others, the programme was attended by Dr. Zafar Afroz Badri, Head KVK Shopian; Mudasir Shafi, District Agriculture Officer, Nisar Ahmad, Subject matter specialist Horticulture, SDAO Keller, ADO Keller, representative from Animal Husbandry, Sheep Husbandry, Fisheries, Bank, and other concerned officers and officials.

Resident Commission J&K New Delhi marks 12th International Yoga Day with focus on healthy ageing



KT News Desk

NEW DELHI, JUNE 22: The Resident Commission, J&K, New Delhi, celebrated the 12th International Day of Yoga 2026 with enthusiastic participation from the officers, officials, staff members and representatives of its subordinate offices.

This year's theme, "Yoga for Healthy Aging," underscored yoga's role in promoting longevity, mobility, mental well-being and preventive healthcare. The theme holds added significance amid rising life expectancy and a growing focus on holistic health and wellness. The event, as per an official statement, was organized under the overall supervision and guidance of Additional Resident Commissioner Anil Sharma and coordinated by the

Government Ayush Dispensary, Resident Commission.

Dr. Jyotsna Mukhi, Nodal Officer, Directorate of Ayush, Jammu & Kashmir, hosted the programme.

Expert instructors from the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga conducted a 45-minute yoga session. They demonstrated various yogic practices and asanas designed to enhance flexibility, balance, strength and overall well-being.

Speaking on the occasion, Anil Sharma emphasized the importance of adopting yoga as a way of life for maintaining physical fitness, mental well-being and healthy aging. He also appreciated the efforts of the Directorate of Ayush, the yoga instructors and all the participants for making the event a success.

Rahim Rather visits fire affected Dara-ul-aloom site in Pakherpora



KT News Desk

BUDGAM, JUNE 22: Speaker Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, on Monday, visited the site of the fire incident at Dara-ul-aloom, Pakherpora, to assess the situation on the spot and express solidarity with the affected students, staff and local residents.

During his visit, the Speaker, as per an official statement, expressed deep

grief and sorrow over the unfortunate incident that caused huge damage to the educational institution. He interacted with the students, management and members of the local community and assured them of all possible support in restoration of the institute. Abdul Rahim Rather emphasized the importance of the institution and assured the affected people that Dara-ul-Uloom would be re-established at the

earliest. He stated that every effort would be made to ensure that educational activities resume without undue delay.

The Speaker also directed the district administration to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the damages caused by the fire and initiate the reconstruction process on a priority basis. He urged the concerned authorities to expedite all necessary formalities to facilitate the early rebuilding of the institution.

RBI sets up financial awareness stall at Kheer Bhawani mela



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 22: The Reserve Bank of India participated in the annual Kheer Bhawani Mela by setting up a financial awareness stall at the revered shrine of Mata Kheer Bhawani at Tulmulla, Ganderbal.

The initiative was aimed at enhancing financial literacy and promoting safe banking practices among the devotees and visitors attending the mela. The stall, as per an official statement, also highlighted the key initiatives of the Reserve Bank of India in the areas of financial inclusion, customer protection and digital payment security. The

visitors were sensitized about the common cyber frauds and were advised to follow the "Be Aware, Be Secure" approach while undertaking the digital financial transactions.

The FIDD officials interacted with the public in local dialect and disseminated information on various aspects of financial literacy, including safe digital banking practices, protection against financial frauds, grievance redress mechanisms, deposit insurance and the importance of responsible financial behaviour. Besides, information brochures and awareness material was distributed among the visitors during the mela.

J&K H&UDD receives SKOCH National Awards for digital governance initiatives

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 22: The Jammu and Kashmir Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD) has achieved a significant milestone in the field of digital governance by securing two prestigious SKOCH National Awards, Gold and Silver, for its innovative and citizen-centric digital transformation initiatives.

Both projects were conceptualized and initiated under the visionary directions and continuous guidance of Mandeep Kaur, Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD, as per an official statement, with the objective of transforming the public service delivery and enhancing the digital governance across the Urban Development sector. Her unwavering focus on innovation, transparency and technology-enabled governance has played a pivotal role in successful implementation of these initiatives.

On behalf of H&UDD, Ankush Kapoor, Chief Informatics Officer and Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), H&UDD, received the awards during the SKOCH Awards Ceremony held in New Delhi.

The awards were conferred for



the flagship projects including Automated Building Permission System (ABPS) using Auto DCR technology integrated with GIS-based Land Use and J&K Gati Shakti GIS Asset Mapping System for comprehensive GIS-based asset mapping, monitoring and infrastructure planning.

The Automated Building Permission System has revolutionized the process of granting building permissions by introducing automated scrutiny of building plans through Auto DCR technology integrated with GIS-based land use verification. The system has

significantly reduced the processing time, enhanced transparency, ensured compliance with planning regulations and improved ease of doing business for the citizens and stakeholders.

The J&K Gati Shakti GIS Asset Mapping System has enabled digital mapping and monitoring of public infrastructure assets across Urban Local Bodies and government agencies. The platform supports evidence-based planning, inter-departmental coordination, efficient asset management and informed decision-making through advanced GIS technology.

Both the initiatives have brought about a transformative change in public service delivery, government digital functioning, monitoring mechanisms and data-driven governance across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Commissioner Secretary appreciated the efforts of the officers, technical teams, Urban Local Bodies and all stakeholders associated with the projects. She reiterated the department's commitment towards leveraging the technology for improving governance and delivering efficient, transparent and citizen-centric services.

DC Samba pitches for multi-pronged measures to combat drug menace during NCORD meeting

KT News Desk

SAMBA, JUNE 22: Deputy Commissioner Samba Ayushi Sudan on Monday chaired a meeting of the District Level Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) Committee to review the implementation of anti-drug initiatives to curb the menace of narcotics and substance abuse in the district.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, reviewed the action taken by the stakeholder departments and stressed the need for a coordinated, intelligence-driven and community-oriented approach to eliminate drug abuse and trafficking from the district.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned departments to undertake detailed mapping of the district to identify drug hotspots and other areas susceptible to illegal narcotic activities. She

instructed enforcement agencies to intensify surveillance and strengthen enforcement measures in all such vulnerable pockets.

To reinforce preventive efforts in educational institutions, the Deputy Commissioner directed the Education Department to ensure installation of CCTV cameras in coaching centres and educational institutions wherever required. She also called for regular counselling sessions to facilitate early identification of vulnerable students and promote awareness about the harmful effects of substance abuse.

Highlighting the need for constructive youth engagement, the Deputy Commissioner instructed the concerned departments to organise regular sports activities and ensure adequate availability of sports equipment to encourage healthy lifestyles and channelise the energy of youth towards positive pursuits.

The DC further directed all departments to strengthen Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities, particularly in rural areas, by ensuring close coordination among all stakeholders to maximise awareness at the grassroots level.

Reviewing road safety and enforcement measures, she instructed the concerned authorities to conduct mandatory medical examinations of drivers involved in rash driving and take stringent action, including cancellation of driving licences, in cases of drunk driving.

The Deputy Commissioner also directed the Drug Control authorities to intensify inspections of pharmaceutical outlets and ensure 100 per cent CCTV surveillance and Computerised Billing System (CBS) coverage in medical establishments to prevent misuse of prescription drugs.

Two-hour rain paralyses Srinagar

Woman electrocuted to death | Shops flooded | Vehicles submerged

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 22: A spell of heavy rainfall lasting nearly two hours on Monday brought large parts of Srinagar to a standstill, exposing what residents described as the failure of the city's drainage system, while a 65-year-old woman lost her life after being electrocuted amid the downpour in the downtown area.

The intense rainfall inundated several localities across the city, particularly in Downtown Srinagar, where roads turned into streams, vehicles were stranded in floodwaters, shops were flooded, and residents struggled to navigate through waterlogged streets.

Among the worst-hit areas were Nowpora Safakadal, Sakidafar, Ganderpora Eidgah, Waniyar, Rathpora, Daulatabad Khanyar, Main Chowk Khanyar, Naid Kadal, Zadi Masjid Safakadal, Rajouri Kadal, Firdous Colony Eidgah, Khanyar, Fateh Kadal, Babdemb and several adjoining localities.

Videos that surfaced on social media showed cars and auto-rickshaws partially submerged in water, commuters wading through flooded roads and traffic moving at a snail's pace as rainwater accumulated rapidly across low-lying areas.

The rainfall turned tragic in Naid Kadal,



where a woman died after coming into contact with a live electric current.

Officials told KNO that the deceased, identified as Shamima Makhdoomi (65), wife of Ghulam Nabi and a resident of Naid Kadal, received an electric shock after touching an electric pole during the rainfall. She was

shifted to a hospital in critical condition, where doctors declared her brought dead.

As residents came to terms with the tragedy, anger mounted across affected localities, with many questioning how a city could be thrown into chaos after only a brief spell of rain. At Khanyar Chowk,

several shopkeepers were seen removing water from their premises and salvaging damaged goods hours after the rain had stopped.

Gulam Mohammad, a shopkeeper, told KNO that water entered his shop within minutes, causing substantial losses. "We watched helplessly as water rushed inside. Goods kept getting damaged while we tried to save whatever we could. This is not the first time. Every year we suffer losses because the drainage system fails whenever it rains," he said.

Another shopkeeper, Zahoor Ahmad, said the flooding had disrupted business and added to the economic hardships already being faced by small traders. "We pay taxes, electricity bills and other charges, but when it comes to basic civic facilities, nobody takes responsibility. A few hours of rain should not be enough to flood markets and damage businesses," he said.

Residents said the scenes witnessed across Srinagar reflected years of neglect, poor planning and the failure to upgrade drainage infrastructure despite repeated assurances by successive governments.

A resident of Khanyar said Monday's rainfall once again exposed the vulnerability of the city's civic infrastructure. "It was not a cloudburst, and it was not an entire day of

rainfall. It rained for barely one to two hours, yet roads disappeared under water. Vehicles got stuck, people could not move freely, and entire localities looked like pools. What more proof is needed that the drainage system has failed?" he asked.

Several residents said the situation was particularly alarming because the city struggled to cope with a relatively short spell of rainfall, raising concerns about its preparedness for more intense weather events in the future. "If a couple of hours of rain can cripple normal life, authorities must explain how the city is prepared for prolonged rainfall or extreme weather conditions. Every year the same localities suffer, and every year the same promises are made," said another resident. The residents urged the Omar Abdullah-led government and Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to identify vulnerable zones, modernise drainage infrastructure, improve monitoring mechanisms and ensure accountability of departments responsible for recurring urban flooding.

They said Monday's downpour once again highlighted the urgent need for long-term solutions, warning that unless concrete measures are taken, Srinagar will continue to witness the same scenes of flooding, disruption and public suffering whenever heavy rainfall occurs—(KNO)

Parliament Panel flags passport delays in J&K, Ladakh

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Jammu, Jun 22: Chairperson of the parliamentary panel on the Ministry of External Affairs, Shashi Tharoor, on Monday said that they are concerned about some of the delays impeding passport issuance in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

Talking to reporters, Tharoor, who heads the department-related parliamentary standing committee on External Affairs, said that they want the speeding up of passport delivery for applicants in J&K and Ladakh.

"We are concerned about some of the delays that have been impeding passport issuance in this area, and we have been raising some very strong questions because we want to see improvements and



speeding up of passport delivery for applicants in Kashmir, Leh, Srinagar, and Jammu," he said.

Tharoor said that they have held discussions with different stakeholders over the issuance of passports. "We already had very serious discussions. We had conversations with the Regional Passport Office, the MEA

representative from Delhi, the police, and the postal department," he said.

The MP said it has been a good start to their visit, and they have four more days in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

"We will see everything and then decide what to put in the report," he said.

He added that the visiting MPs have found it a

very meaningful visit and had some very strong and constructive discussions.

Tharoor said the committee is in Jammu & Kashmir to study Indo-Pak and Sino-India relations, as well as the functioning of passport offices and Passport Seva Kendras.

"I just want to make it very clear this is not a visit about checking conditions in the Kashmir Valley. The committee is here to study three issues: Indo-Pakistan relations, Sino-Indian relations, and the functioning of passport offices and Passport Seva Kendras. These are the only three issues we are studying. We are not here to look at domestic matters; that is not our business. We are the External Affairs Committee," he said—(KNO)

Spirit of Kashmiriyat shines at Tulmulla Mela

■ Muslims assist Kashmiri Pandits



Rehan Qayoom Mir

Ganderbal, Jun 22: The annual Kheer Bhawani Mela at Tulmulla in Ganderbal district on Monday witnessed heartwarming scenes of communal harmony as local Muslims extended support and assistance to Kashmiri Pandit devotees visiting the revered shrine.

Hundreds of local residents volunteered to help pilgrims by guiding them, arranging drinking water, assisting elderly devotees and facilitating smooth movement in and around the temple premises. The gesture was widely appreciated by the visiting devotees,

who described it as a reflection of Kashmir's centuries-old tradition of brotherhood and coexistence.

Several devotees said the warm welcome and support from local Muslims strengthened their emotional bond with their homeland and revived memories of shared cultural traditions.

A local resident Manzoor Ahmad Wani told KNO that the Kheer Bhawani Mela is not only a religious occasion but also an opportunity to uphold the values of mutual respect and communal harmony that have long been associated with Kashmiriyat.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Anand Jain posted as DGP Ladakh

KNO

Srinagar, Jun 22: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Monday posted senior IPS officer Anand Jain as Director General of Police (DGP), Ladakh, with immediate effect.

According to an order issued by the MHA, Anand Jain, a 1999-batch AGMUT cadre IPS officer, has been transferred from Jammu and Kashmir to Ladakh and will serve as the DGP of the Union Territory until further orders.

Jain was serving in Jammu and Kashmir Police and has held several key assignments in the Union Territory, including postings as IGP Jammu Zone, Director Anti-Corruption Bureau and ADGP Armed—(KNO)

Rainawari man succumbs to electrocution injuries

KNO

Srinagar, Jun 22: A 35-year-old man from the Rainawari area of Srinagar succumbed to his injuries at a hospital on Monday after suffering an electric shock at his residence late Sunday evening, officials said.

An official said that the man received an electric shock while carrying out household work at his home.

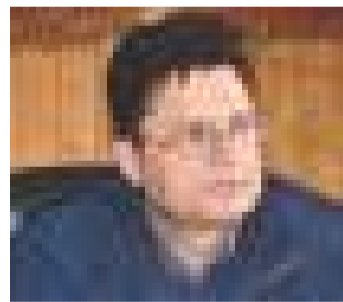
He was immediately shifted to SMHS Hospital Srinagar in a critical condition, where he remained under treatment. However, despite sustained medical efforts, he succumbed to his injuries on Monday morning.

The deceased has been identified as Asif Ahmad Mir, son of Fayaz Ahmad Mir, a resident of Rainawari.

Meanwhile, police have taken cognizance of the incident and initiated further proceedings—(KNO)

SANJY-2026

MD KPDCL reviews progress of power arrangements



KT News Desk

Anantnag, June 22: Managing Director, Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL), Mahmood Ahmad Shah, accompanied by the Chief Engineer (Distribution) KPDCL, Nissar Ahmad Lone and Superintending Engineer of Circle South (Bijbehara) conducted an extensive review of the ongoing works and preparedness for the upcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY) 2026 at Pahalgam Anantnag.

During the on-ground review, the Managing Director took detailed stock of the power infrastructure being put in place and issued clear directives to field officers to maintain 24x7 power availability throughout the Yatra period.

The Superintending Engineer apprised the Managing Director that almost all requisite arrangements have been put in place for

the Yatra, which is scheduled to commence on 3rd July 2026. He briefed the MD on the illumination arrangements made at various Padavs, including the deployment of DG sets and Gen sets of varying capacities, and the installation of Solar Lighting Systems along Yatra tracks where grid supply is not feasible. It was informed that adequate fuel stocks are available at all sites, with regular replenishment protocols in place. A sufficient number of buffer Distribution Transformers (DTs) and standby DG sets have also been stationed to meet any unforeseen contingencies.

MD KPDCL assured that there will be no shortage or power cuts during the Amarnath Yatra and we have deployed special teams at all important places to ensure seamless electricity during the yatra. He appreciated the dedication and professionalism of the engineers and field staff working tirelessly, often in challenging terrain and adverse weather conditions, to ensure seamless power arrangements for the Yatra.

The MD emphasized that no stone must be left unturned in delivering efficient services to the pilgrims and assured that the management will remain fully

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Punjab 'tax' row

Mutton dealers suspend livestock imports to J&K

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 22: The Kashmir Mutton Dealers Association (KMDA) on Monday announced suspension of fresh livestock imports into Jammu and Kashmir and advised the public to reconsider marriage and other event schedules in the coming weeks. It declared that no vehicle carrying livestock would be loaded for the Valley until the government resolves long-pending transportation issues faced by traders in Punjab.

Addressing a press conference here, KMDA General Secretary Mehraj-ud-Din said traders across major livestock markets supplying Kashmir have decided not to dispatch any fresh livestock-laden vehicles to Jammu and Kashmir until their concerns are addressed.

He said the decision could impact mutton availability during the upcoming marriage season, engagement ceremonies and Nazar-o-Niyaz gatherings if the issue remains unresolved.

"We appeal to people who have fixed marriage dates or planned major functions after Muharram to take the situation into account and make necessary adjustments. Traders will not be in a position to guarantee supplies if fresh livestock movement remains suspended," Mehraj-ud-Din



said. The association said existing stocks available in the Valley may be sufficient for the next few days, and efforts would be made to ensure availability during Muharram, but warned that a prolonged halt in livestock imports could affect supplies thereafter.

"We usually have stock availability for two to three days. We will try to manage supplies during Muharram, but if fresh vehicles do not arrive, the situation after that could become difficult," he said. Mehraj-ud-Din

further alleged that livestock transporters continue to face harassment, prolonged stoppages and excessive collections at checkpoints in Punjab, increasing transportation costs and causing losses to traders.

He said transporters are being forced to pay between Rs 20,000 and Rs 30,000 per vehicle, while livestock carriers are allegedly detained for several hours during transit. "When vehicles carrying livestock

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Missing Shopian youth found dead in Vishow Nallah



KNO

Shopian, Jun 22: A youth who had been missing from his home since June 9 was found dead after his body was recovered from Vishow Nallah near Reshinagri Adda in south Kashmir's Shopian district on Monday, officials said. An official said that the deceased was identified as Imran Doiey, son of Mohammad Aslam Doiey, a resident of Sedow village. According to locals, he was mentally unstable. The official said Imran had gone missing from his home on June 9, following which his family and police launched efforts to trace him.

His body was recovered from Vishow Nallah near Reshinagri Adda on Monday and shifted for medico-legal formalities. After completion of the legal procedures, the body was handed over to his family for last rites, while police have initiated an investigation into the incident—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

Tourism As A Bridge: KCCI's Demands Are Genuine

The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry's participation in the Srinagar-Nalanda Dialogue has rightly highlighted the transformative role of tourism in fostering peace, employment, and sustainable development. The KCCI has made genuine and compelling demands that deserve immediate government attention. Tourism is a lifeline for thousands of families, a bridge for peace, and a tool for cultural preservation. The government

must act on the chamber's suggestions to unlock the full potential of this vital industry. The chamber's call for promoting rural tourism, heritage destinations, craft clusters, and eco-tourism circuits is both timely and necessary. Kashmir's unemployment rate among youth aged 15 to 29 stands at a staggering 32.8 per cent. Tourism has the capacity to absorb this workforce, provided the government creates the right conditions. The rapid growth of homestays has

already shown how tourism can democratise benefits, directly connecting visitors with local communities. This model must be expanded and supported with policy incentives and infrastructure development. The KCCI's concern over the fossil repository at Guryul Ravine is particularly significant. This site contains one of the world's most complete geological records of the Permian-Triassic extinction event, yet it remains neglected. Kashmir lost an opportunity for

international recognition due to the absence of peace and stability. Now, with improved conditions, the government must prioritise the protection, development, and promotion of this site. It could become a global attraction for geologists, researchers, and tourists alike. The commerce body has rightly invoked the teachings of Lal Ded and Sheikh-ul-Alam as guides for balancing development with ecological preservation. Tourism must not come at the cost of the

environment. Sustainable tourism practices, eco-tourism circuits, and community-based income generation should be the way forward. The government must take the chamber's suggestions seriously. Tourism has the power to address youth unemployment, promote cultural preservation, and foster peace. The revival of tourism in Kashmir is a pathway to stability and prosperity. The KCCI has shown the way. Now it is the government's turn to act.

INDIA'S SPACE ODYSSEY

Building country's space future through Vishwas, Vikas, and Jan Kalyan

India's space journey over the last 12 years reflects the spirit of Vishwas, Vikas and Jan Kalyan. Driven by Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Make in India and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the nation has emerged as a leading space power. Landmark achievements include Chandrayaan-3's lunar south pole landing, Aditya-L1's solar mission, and preparations for Gaganyaan and a national space station. Space startups have grown from one in 2014 to over 400 as of February 2026. Liberalised FDI norms, greater private participation, and NSIL-led commercialisation have accelerated growth.

The Rise of a Global Space Power

Over the last twelve years, India's space programme has emerged as a symbol of national confidence, technological self-reliance, and global ambition. Three defining pillars have shaped this transformation: India's Space Capability through landmark missions and indigenous technologies; building National Capacity through space-based applications for governance, connectivity, disaster management, agriculture, healthcare, and education; and global partnerships that have enhanced India's credibility as a trusted space partner.

India's Space Capability: Reaching Beyond Earth

Lunar Exploration - The Chandrayaan Programme

Chandrayaan-1 in 2008 discovered evidence of water molecules on the Moon's surface. Chandrayaan-2, launched in 2019, provided some of the highest-resolution images of the lunar surface. On 23 August 2023, Chandrayaan-3 made India the first country to achieve a soft landing near the Moon's south pole and the fourth nation to successfully soft-land on the lunar surface. Scientific instruments confirmed the presence of Sulphur through direct elemental analysis. Chandrayaan-4, planned for 2027, aims to land on the Moon, collect samples, and return them to Earth. Chandrayaan-5/LUPEX will explore water and other volatile materials near the lunar south pole.

The Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan)

On 24 September 2014, Mangalyaan successfully entered Martian orbit, making India the first country to reach Mars on its maiden attempt. Originally designed for a six-month mission, it remained operational for more than eight years.

Aditya-L1: India's First Solar Observatory
Launched in 2023, Aditya-L1 was successfully placed in a halo orbit around the Sun-Earth L1 Lagrange Point. More than 27 TB of solar observation data have already been disseminated.

Space Astronomy and Space Docking

AstroSat completed a decade in orbit in September 2025. XPoSat, launched on 1 January 2024, expanded India's capabilities in X-ray astronomy. The Space Docking Experiment (SPADEX) in January 2025 made India the fourth nation to demonstrate autonomous docking and undocking in space.

Venus Orbiter Mission

Approved by the Government of India, the mission is targeted for launch in March 2028 to study Venus' geology, surface composition, atmosphere, and ionosphere.

Gaganyaan: India's First Human Spaceflight Programme

Approved in January 2019, the mission aims to send up to three Indian astronauts into a 400-kilometre orbit. The programme includes two uncrewed missions and one crewed mission and entered its final phase in 2025. As part of preparations, Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla participated in the ISRO-NASA supported Axiom-4 mission to the International Space Station in 2025.

National Space Station



The Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS) will be a five-module space station in Low Earth Orbit. In September 2024, the Union Cabinet approved the development and launch of the first module, BAS-01, by 2028.

Building Capacity Through Private Participation, Innovation, and Technological Development

Private Sector Powering India's Space Transformation

The opening of the space sector for private players in 2020, followed by the Indian Space Policy 2023, enabled greater private participation. Government initiatives such as liberalised FDI policy, the IN-SPACe Seed Fund Scheme, the 1,000 crore Venture Capital Fund, and the 500 crore Technology Adoption Fund have strengthened the ecosystem.

In February 2024, FDI policy was liberalised allowing up to 100% FDI in selected activities. Up to 74% FDI is permitted under the automatic route for satellite manufacturing and operations. Up to 49% FDI is allowed for launch vehicles, while 100% FDI under the automatic route is permitted for manufacturing satellite components.

In 2014, India had just one registered space start-up. As of February 2026, that number had crossed 400. Investment in Indian space start-ups exceeded \$500 million.

Commercialisation: Expanding India's Space Economy

India's space economy, currently valued at \$8 billion with a 2-3% share in the global space economy, is projected to grow five-fold to \$40-45 billion over the next decade. NewSpace

India Limited (NSIL), established in 2019, and IN-SPACe established in 2022, have created a strong institutional framework. NSIL revenues increased from 321.77 crore in FY 2021-22 to 3,246.09 crore in FY 2024-25.

Self-Reliant Space Transportation

India has achieved self-reliance in space transportation systems through PSLV, GSLV and LVM3 launch vehicles. The government has approved the development of a Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV) with a maximum payload capability of 30 tons to Low Earth Orbit. Reusable launch vehicle technologies are also being developed.

Indigenous Electronics and On-board Systems

ISRO jointly with Semiconductor Laboratory, Chandigarh developed VIKRAM3201, India's first fully indigenous 32-bit space microprocessor, along with KALPANA32 for high-reliability space missions.

Indian Space Sector Credibility on the Global Stage

ISRO launched 35 foreign satellites between the 1990s and 2014. After 2014 and as of March 2026, the number increased sharply to 399 foreign satellite launches. India has signed more than 300 space cooperation agreements with 61 countries and 5 multilateral organisations.

Key International Collaborations:

- NASA-ISRO NISAR: Launched on 30 July 2025, the mission monitors changes in land, glaciers, forests, and oceans.
- TRISHNA (ISRO-CNES): Scheduled for launch in 2026, providing high-resolution thermal imaging for natural resource assessment.
- Chandrayaan-5/LUPEX (ISRO-JAXA): Scheduled for launch in 2027-28 to explore the Moon's polar region.
- ESA-ISRO Partnership: Signed Joint Statement of Intent on 7 May 2025 for future human space missions.
- India-Germany: Identified new opportunities in satellite communications, human spaceflight, and microgravity research.
- India-Italy: Elevated space cooperation under the Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029.
- ISRO-Saudi Space Agency: MoU signed on 23 April 2025.
- Space for Citizens - Applications That Touch Everyday Life

NavIC - India's Indigenous Navigation System

NavIC provides accurate positioning, navigation, and timing services across India and up to 1,500 kilometres beyond its borders. Five second-generation satellites (NVS-01 to NVS-05) are planned to enhance reliability.

Data-Driven Governance

Satellite-based data supports improved planning, real-time monitoring, and resource management across agriculture, water resources, rural development, and other sectors. Disaster Management & Early Warning Satellites support monitoring of cyclones, floods, landslides, forest fires, and other natural hazards. The National Database for Emergency Management (NDEM 5.0) provides real-time geospatial information.

Supporting Coastal Communities

Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) advisories help fishermen identify productive fishing areas, reducing fuel consumption and search time. Satellite-Based Solutions in Health and Education

ISRO provides telemedicine services in remote and high-altitude regions, with around 179 telemedicine nodes operational. Under PM e-VIDYA, 370 educational television channels are delivered through GSAT-15 and GSAT-9 satellites.

South Asia Satellite (GSAT-9)
Launched on 5 May 2017, the satellite provides coverage over Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, supporting DTH broadcasting, telemedicine, tele-education, banking connectivity, weather forecasting, and disaster management.

Towards Becoming a Responsible Space Power

Over the last twelve years, India's space programme has shown how technological advancement can directly support national development. India has emerged as a trusted global space partner through international cooperation, commercial launches, and knowledge sharing. As India advances towards Space Vision 2047, the focus remains on expanding scientific frontiers while creating benefits for society.

Disclaimer: This is an abridged version of the original PIB article "India's Space Odyssey: Building India's Space Future" (June 21, 2026). Key facts and data have been retained. For the complete article, please refer to the official PIB website.

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Amarnath Ji Yatra-2026

Sakeena Itoo reviews medical preparedness in Pahalgam

'Exhibit full hospitality to pilgrims so they have an enriching, pleasant, lasting experience'

KT News Desk

ANANTNAG, JUNE 22: Minister for Health & Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, on Monday visited Pahalgam and chaired a meeting to review the medical preparedness preparations for ensuing Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2026 at Pahalgam Club here.

MLA Pahalgam, Altaf Ahmad Wani; Director SKIMS; Principal GMC Anantnag; Director Health Services, Kashmir; MD JKMSCL; RTO Kashmir; Superintending Engineers PHE and KPDC, SDM Pahalgam, ACD, CMO, DD Tourism, Executive Engineers of various engineering wings and other officials attended the meeting.

The Minister, as per an official statement, had a detailed review of healthcare, logistical and other preparations being put in place by the different departments for the



smooth conduct of the annual pilgrimage.

Addressing the officers, the Minister emphasized on the critical importance of robust medical facilities along the Yatra route including transit camps, stations and other prominent places. She stressed that the department must provide best possible healthcare to the pilgrims for their health and wellness during the entire pilgrimage.

Sakeena Itoo also reviewed

the drinking water and power supply, availability of essential commodities, transport and sanitation, road connectivity, telecommunication and other facilities related to the SANJY.

The Minister placed special emphasis on robust transport management and sanitation, including measures for the post-Yatra period, saying that this would ease the experience for both pilgrims and tourists. She also called for upgrading facilities

wherever needed, backed by well-planned contingency plans ready for immediate execution.

Sakeena Itoo impressed upon the officers to exhibit full hospitality to the pilgrims so they have an enriching, pleasant and lasting experience of the place. "Pilgrims need to be facilitated in all possible ways for smooth conduct of the sacred journey", she remarked.

The Director Health Services, Kashmir, briefed the Minister

about the healthcare arrangements made by the department for the devotees on both Pahalgam and Baltal Axis. He said that facilities including establishment of hospitals, advance and critical care units, deployment of specialists having expertise in high altitude healthcare, ambulances, medicines and other logistics have been meticulously planned and put in place.

Following the meeting, several public delegations and representatives of various associations called on the Minister and put forth their issues and concerns.

The Minister assured them that their genuine issues will be resolved in a time bound manner.

Later, Sakeena Itoo visited the Government Hospital Pahalgam to take stock of its functioning and readiness for the SANJY. She inspected various sections of the hospital and directed the concerned officials to ensure best possible healthcare facilities are available at the hospital.

Kathua Administration intensifies SANJY preparations in Lakhanpur



KT News Desk

KATHUA, JUNE 22: Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma Monday visited Lakhanpur to review the preparedness and arrangements being made for the convenience of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra pilgrims.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, inspected the upcoming Yatri Facilitation Centre and reviewed the arrangements related to essential facilities, including safe drinking water supply, uninterrupted power availability, sanitation and toilet facilities, cleanliness measures and healthcare services. He also inspected the RFID and e-KYC counters being established at the centre for the facilitation of pilgrims.

The Deputy Commissioner was apprised that over 90% of the civil works of the Yatri Facilitation Centre have been completed, while the remaining finishing and facelifting works are on at full pace. He was informed that the facility shall be made fully operational at least one week before the commencement of the Yatra.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned officers and executing agencies to

expedite the remaining works while adhering to quality standards. He stressed maintaining close coordination among departments, timely completion of all arrangements and provision of seamless facilities to the visiting pilgrims.

Reviewing the arrangements for setting up Langars, the Deputy Commissioner informed that the permissions for the same shall be issued soon after completion of the requisite formalities.

The annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra 2026 would start from Kathua towards Jammu on July 1, 2026. The first batch of pilgrims shall leave the Jammu Base Camp on July 2, 2026.

The Yatri Facilitation Centre at Lakhanpur is being developed as a key transit facility for pilgrims entering Jammu and Kashmir, with provisions for registration, verification, health assistance and other essential services.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by DC State Taxes Joginder Jasrotia; ADC Mahima Madan; Chief Planning Officer Ranjeet Thakur; XEN PDD Shafi Ahmed; Executive Officer Municipal Committee Lakhanpur Prithvi Sangra and other concerned officers.

Foundation stone laid for redevelopment of Sabzi Mandi at Parade Jammu

Rs 5.88 crore project envisages development of modern infrastructure, improved amenities

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JUNE 22: In a significant initiative aimed at modernising the city's traditional vegetable market, the foundation stone for the redevelopment of the Sabzi Mandi at Parade in the Jammu East Assembly constituency was laid Monday by local MLA Yudhvir Sethi in the presence of Commissioner Jammu Municipal Corporation and CEO Jammu Smart City, Dr. Devansh Yadav.

Speaking on the occasion, Yudhvir Sethi said that the redevelopment of the Sabzi Mandi would usher in a new era for one of Jammu's oldest and busiest markets by providing modern infrastructure and improved facilities for vendors and visitors alike. He said the project would enhance hygiene standards, improve traffic circulation and create a more organised and customer-friendly trading environment.

The redevelopment project, with an estimated DPR cost of 5.88 crore, aims to transform the existing mandi into a clean, well-planned and user-friendly market equipped with upgraded civic amenities and durable infrastructure.

As part of the project, a spacious Mild Steel (MS) covered shed will be constructed to provide weather-protected vending space for traders. The facility would accommodate 117 vendor platforms, each measuring 1.8 metres x 2.1 metres, ensuring systematic



and orderly market operations. The shed area would have Kota stone flooring, while the vendor platforms would be furnished with granite cladding and granite tops to ensure durability, hygiene and ease of maintenance.

The project also envisages the construction of 44 permanent commercial shop blocks, each measuring 2.4 metres x 2.7 metres, to support vegetable vendors and allied businesses in a structured retail setting.

To improve sanitation and cleanliness, the existing drainage network will be strengthened and rehabilitated to minimise water logging and ensure efficient disposal of wastewater within the mandi premises.

The redevelopment plan further includes a redesigned main entry gate with sandstone cladding, enhancing the visual appeal and identity of the market. Modern public amenities, including separate toilet blocks for men and women and drinking water cooler units, would also be installed for the convenience of traders and visitors.

Movement and circulation areas within the market would be developed using Pavement Quality Concrete (PQC) to withstand heavy pedestrian and light vehicular traffic, ensuring long-term durability and reduced maintenance requirements.

The project has been conceived to improve market functionality through an organised layout, better accessibility, enhanced safety and a more efficient shopping experience. The upgraded infrastructure is also expected to significantly improve hygiene standards and provide a cleaner, more convenient environment for the handling and sale of fresh produce, giving the historic Sabzi Mandi a modern and sustainable facelift.

Among others present on the occasion were Additional Chief Executive Officer Jammu Smart City Kulbhushan Khajuria; Project Director Sunil Thosoo; General Manager Saleem-ul-Sabah; Assistant Executive Engineer Vivek Chopra and other officers and officials.

CDF, MPLAD Works: DC Kishtwar sets deadlines for completion



KT News Desk

KISHTWAR, JUNE 22: Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar Pankaj Kumar Sharma Monday convened a meeting to assess the status and progress of works being executed under the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) for the FYs 2025-26 and 2026-27.

Chief Planning Officer Akhil Thakur briefed the Deputy Commissioner about the current status of the CDF and MPLADS works.

The Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, reviewed in detail the constituency-wise and work-wise progress of each project.

The Deputy Commissioner set three deadlines—June 30,

July 15 and July 31, 2026—for the completion of different works. He directed the executing agencies to maintain pace as per the deadlines adding that the progress of each work shall be cross-checked at the next review meeting. He directed the Executive Engineer REW to issue final notices to the contractors who have not started the allotted works yet.

The DC further directed the Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DOs) to book expenditure and submit bills for works that have already been completed.

The meeting was attended by BDO Trigam Roopesh Sharma; BDO Bounjwah Aijaz Ahmad; BDO Inderwal Zahid Mughal; BDO Thakrie Ishfaq Molvi; BDO Palmar Rajesh Padha; ExEn ReW Satbir Singh; ExEn JPDCI Abdul Hamid and other concerned.

From Cricket Field to Social Cause Christopher Mpfu promotes drug-free living among students at PM Shri GHSS Khellani

KT News Desk

DODA, JUNE 22: As part of the ongoing Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan, an anti-drug awareness programme was organized on Monday at Government PM Shri Higher Secondary School Khellani by the Young Star Cricket Club (YSCC) in collaboration with the District Administration Doda and the Health Department.

The programme, as per an official statement, was graced by former International Cricketer from Zimbabwe Christopher Mpfu, who is presently in Doda as the Brand Ambassador of the All India 16th Gufran Memorial T-20 Cricket Championship.

Among those present on the occasion were the School Principal Mohammad Ahsan and faculty members of the institution and officials from YSCC and a large gathering of students.

Welcoming the distinguished guest, the school Principal expressed gratitude to Christopher Mpfu, YSCC, the District Administration and the Health Department for organizing the awareness programme and providing students with an opportunity to interact with

an international sportsperson. The speakers highlighted the importance of collective efforts in combating drug abuse and promoting healthy lifestyles among youth.

Addressing the gathering, Christopher Mpfu shared valuable insights from his journey in international cricket and emphasized the significance of discipline, hard work, perseverance and healthy living in achieving success. He urged students to stay away from drugs and other harmful substances, stating that sports and education are powerful tools to build character and achieve personal excellence. He encouraged the youth to channel their energy towards constructive pursuits and become agents of positive change in society.

The students and staff actively interacted with the former cricketer and pledged their support towards the fight against drug abuse.

The students, teachers and participants took a solemn anti-drug pledge, reaffirming their commitment to remain vigilant against substance abuse and contribute towards realizing the vision of a Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir.

Javid Dar visits Ramban, reviews development works, e-inaugurates projects

KT News Desk

RAMBAN, JUNE 22: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Javid Ahmad Dar, Monday reviewed the progress of development works besides assessing implementation of flagship schemes in Ramban during his whirlwind tour to the district.

He also e-inaugurated several projects and conducted extensive field visits to assess the development initiatives on the ground.

MLA Ramban, Arjun Singh Raju; MLA Banihal, Sajjad Shaheen; Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Mohammad Alyas Khan; Directors of Agriculture Jammu; Animal Husbandry Jammu; Horticulture Jammu; Fisheries Department; Registrar Cooperatives J&K; senior officers of Sheep Husbandry Department and other district officers were

present.

Addressing the officers, the Minister, as per an official statement, stressed the importance of maintaining close coordination with public representatives while identifying and finalizing the developmental works. He directed the officers to expedite the execution of ongoing projects and ensure that the benefits of government schemes reach the grassroots level in a time-bound manner. He also called for enhanced public outreach and awareness programmes to maximize beneficiary coverage under various welfare initiatives.

The Minister remarked that with the operationalization of key tunnel projects and the continuous improvement of the National Highway corridor, travel time is being reduced significantly while ensuring all-weather connectivity. He said these transformative projects will not only strengthen



the regional connectivity but also open up new avenues for trade, horticulture, agriculture and employment generation in the district.

The Minister also e-inaugurated various developmental projects completed by different departments and reviewed their impact on service delivery and public welfare.

Earlier, Javid Ahmad Dar inaugurated the Cooperative Super Bazaar Ramban and visited the Advanced Centre

for Horticulture Development, Govindpora. He inspected the functioning of the centre and reviewed the initiatives aimed at promoting horticultural development and farmer welfare.

Later, the Minister laid the foundation stone for the Shah-i-Asrar Memorial School Building at Kashkoot.

Addressing the gathering, he appreciated the efforts of Advocate Raja Salim in establishing the institution and described the initiative as a

significant contribution towards educational advancement and social upliftment in the region.

As part of his extensive tour, the Minister visited the Veterinary Hospital Banihal, Sheep Husbandry Office, Seed Farm, Agriculture Farm Tethar and Sheep Farm Zaban. He reviewed the functioning of these institutions and assessed the status of ongoing developmental and extension activities. He directed the concerned officers to further strengthen the farmer-centric services, improve livestock healthcare facilities and ensure timely availability of quality inputs to the farming community.

Speaking on the occasion, Javid Ahmad Dar said that Ramban district is witnessing a new era of development and connectivity, driven by unprecedented investments in infrastructure, road networks and public welfare programmes. He observed that

major highway upgrades and strategic tunnel projects are transforming Ramban into an important gateway district, boosting the economic opportunities, tourism potential and ease of transportation for the local residents.

Earlier, the Deputy Commissioner presented a comprehensive overview of developmental achievements and the status of ongoing projects across various sectors. He informed that under MGNREGA, the district has 36,550 active job cards during the financial year 2025-26 while 2,382 works have been physically completed. Besides, Aadhaar seeding has reached 99.78 percent completion and timely wage payment stands at 70 percent.

He apprised that 3,758 works had been approved under MGNREGA during 2025-26 while 3,564 works have already been approved for 2026-27. Under PMAY-G, 503 houses have been completed

while the survey conducted under PMAY-G 2.0 has identified 25,530 prospective beneficiaries.

Regarding the achievements under Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), the Deputy Commissioner stated that 1,505 works have been completed under different components of the mission, significantly improving the sanitation infrastructure in rural areas.

Highlighting the performance of the agriculture sector, he informed that substantial progress has been registered in crop production, particularly in oilseeds with production touching 15,687 quintals. He added that farmers and rural youth are actively benefiting from schemes such as Soil Health Cards, Kisan Credit Cards (KCC), PM-KISAN and Kisan Khidmat Ghar (KKG), which are contributing towards enhanced agricultural productivity and income generation.

KCFL creates new football buzz in Kashmir

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 22: The inaugural edition of the Kashmir Champions Football League (KCFL) 2026 has generated tremendous excitement among football enthusiasts, with the first 10 matches of the tournament

witnessing spirited contests and steadily growing crowds at the TRC Turf Ground, Srinagar.

Since its commencement on June 16, the league has emerged as a vibrant celebration of football, bringing together teams representing districts from across Kashmir and providing a

competitive platform for local talent to showcase their abilities.

Each match day has witnessed increasing enthusiasm among spectators, with football lovers from different parts of the Valley thronging the stadium to cheer for their respective teams. The atmosphere reached new

heights on Sunday on 21 June, when not only local supporters but also tourists visiting Kashmir made their way to the TRC Turf Ground to witness the action.

The opening phase of the tournament has produced several closely fought encounters and exciting performances. The

participation of players from all districts has added a unique flavour to the competition, adding a spirit of healthy rivalry and sportsmanship.

As the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council is organising the initiative, the overwhelming response from spectators and the

quality of football on display reaffirm the UT's passion for the sport. The Council expresses confidence that the league would continue to inspire young footballers and contribute significantly to the growth of grassroots football in Jammu and Kashmir.

Pertinent to mention, this is

the first initiative of its kind by any Government in the country, in which district players were scouted, district teams are formed, and were given an equal opportunity to compete with professional players from the valley in an evenly distributed district team of the League.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Jyeshtha Ashtami:

kitchens amid the heavy rush of pilgrims. Emotional scenes unfolded at the shrine as Muslims warmly greeted visiting Kashmiri Pandits, rekindling memories of their shared past and centuries-old bonds of coexistence.

Many displaced Pandits who had come to the Valley for the annual pilgrimage met former neighbours and friends, turning the religious gathering into an occasion of reunion and remembrance.

Several similar reunions were witnessed at the shrine complex as members of the two communities exchanged greetings, recalled old times and expressed hope for the return of peace and harmony in Kashmir.

The scenes of Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits embracing each other drew attention from pilgrims and visitors alike, reflecting Kashmir's traditional ethos of communal harmony and brotherhood.

A devotee, Ashish Nand Bhatt, said he was proud of his Kashmiri roots and had come to seek the blessings of Mata Kheer Bhawani. "I pray for peace, prosperity and brotherhood in Kashmir. The mela is not only a religious gathering but also a symbol of our deep connection with this land," he said.

Another devotee from Jammu, Sunita Raina, said she visits the shrine every year and feels spiritually uplifted. "The atmosphere here is divine and peaceful. We pray for happiness, good health and lasting peace in Jammu and Kashmir," she said.

Pilgrims praised authorities for putting in place comprehensive security, traffic regulation, healthcare, sanitation and other essential services to ensure the smooth and peaceful conduct of the annual festival.

ELABORATE ARRANGEMENTS PUT IN PLACE FOR PILGRIMS: DIV COM GARG

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, who visited the shrine, extended greetings to devotees and said elaborate arrangements had been put in place for pilgrims visiting Kheer Bhawani temples across Kashmir, including Tulmulla, Mangsam, Devsar, Logripora and Tikkar.

He said all necessary facilities, including security, healthcare, sanitation, transport and other essential services, had been arranged to ensure the smooth conduct of the mela.

Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, said the annual mela holds immense religious significance and that the district administration had made comprehensive arrangements for the convenience of pilgrims. He welcomed devotees on behalf of the administration and the people of Ganderbal.

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kashmir, V K Birdi extended greetings to devotees on the occasion and expressed hope that the festival would promote peace, harmony, spiritual strength and communal brotherhood. (KNO)

'We're incomplete

government to facilitate their rehabilitation and called upon local communities to help rebuild the bonds that once defined Kashmir's social fabric.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), hundreds of devotees gathered at the revered shrine of Ragnya Devi at Tikker village to celebrate Zeisht Ashtami, one of the most significant religious occasions for the Kashmiri Pandit community. For many pilgrims, the visit was deeply emotional, as it brought back memories of their ancestral homes and renewed hopes of returning to the Valley.

Devotees appreciated the arrangements made by the administrations, including Kupwara and Baramulla, and thanked residents for their hospitality and support during the festival. Many said such gestures strengthen their belief that coexistence and reconciliation remain possible.

Krishna, a devotee originally from Anantnag, said the displaced community continues to aspire for a permanent return to Kashmir and urged the government to take concrete steps in that direction.

"We want to come back to our homeland. The government must create conditions that facilitate our return and rehabilitation. For years, promises have been made, but now practical measures are needed," he said.

A woman devotee from Jammu, whose family hails from Pulwama, said the return of Kashmiri Pandits cannot be achieved by the government alone and requires support from society as a whole.

"We are incomplete without each other. Kashmir has always belonged to all its communities. Muslims, Sikhs and Pandits must live together again. Locals can play a major role in helping us come back home and rebuilding trust," she said.

She added that despite living outside the Valley for decades, her family has preserved its cultural identity and connection with Kashmir. "We have protected our language and traditions. My children speak Kashmiri fluently because we want them to remain connected to their roots. Kashmir will always be our motherland," she said.

Several devotees stressed that peace, security and communal harmony are essential prerequisites for the return of displaced families. They said a stable environment would encourage more Kashmiri Pandits to reconnect with their ancestral homeland.

An elderly devotee from Baramulla said the government must ensure a dignified and secure rehabilitation process while addressing concerns related to housing, employment and safety.

Members of the community also highlighted issues concerning properties left behind in different parts of the Valley and urged authorities to take effective measures against encroachments and facilitate restoration of their assets.

"Both the government and local people have an important role to play. If we are welcomed back with dignity, security and acceptance, many Kashmiri Pandits would be willing to return. We are incomplete without each other," several devotees said.

Many participants expressed hope that such interactions would strengthen inter-community ties and contribute to creating conditions conducive to the return of displaced Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley. (KNO)

'This is Kashmir

United States and the other from Mumbai struggled to hold back emotions that had travelled with them across continents and years. Around them stood their children, quietly witnessing stories they had grown up hearing suddenly come alive.

"This is the place our mother would always talk about," one of the sisters told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), her eyes fixed on the shrine.

"She would tell us stories about coming here, about the festival and about Kashmir. Today, it feels like we are walking through her memories," she said.

The sisters, whose names could not be recorded amid the large gathering of devotees and emotional scenes at the shrine, said they had last visited Kashmir in 2010.

This year, they made a special journey to attend the annual Kheer Bhawani Mela, determined to introduce their children to a place that has remained central to family conversations for decades.

For them, the pilgrimage was not merely a religious visit. It was a return to an inheritance of memories. "As we walked through the shrine complex, familiar sights brought back memories of childhood summers, family gatherings and our mother's affectionate descriptions of the Valley," one of them said before breaking down in tears.

Their children, witnessing the deeply personal moment, were equally moved. "They have grown up listening to stories about Kashmir and this temple," one of the sisters said. "We wanted them to see it, feel it and understand where a part of their identity comes from."

The family said the visit offered a sense of belonging that is difficult to put into words. "You can live anywhere in the world, but some places always remain a part of you," one of them said.

Notably, the annual Kheer Bhawani Mela, dedicated to Goddess Ragnya Devi and observed on Jyeshtha Ashtami, is among the most significant religious gatherings for Kashmiri Pandits. Every year, devotees return to the historic shrine at Tulmulla to offer prayers and reconnect with their cultural and ancestral heritage.

This year, too, thousands of devotees thronged the shrine. Amid the prayers and festivities, scenes of reunion, remembrance and emotional homecomings quietly became some of the most poignant moments of the day. (KNO)

LG Sinha prays

previous years. The administration has made comprehensive and foolproof arrangements to ensure the convenience, safety and smooth conduct of the pilgrimage for all devotees."

The Lieutenant Governor extended his greetings to devotees and wished that the blessings of Mata Ragnya Devi continue to guide everyone towards harmony, progress and spiritual fulfillment.

Interacting with Kashmiri Pandit Community members, the Lieutenant Governor assured that the comprehensive arrangements have been successfully put in place to ensure a seamless and spiritual experience for everyone.

The Lieutenant Governor commended the proactive efforts of the local administration, emphasizing that the administration remains fully committed to enhancing infrastructure and support services to accommodate the growing influx of devotees from across the nation.

He also appreciated all the stakeholders for their seamless coordination and arrangements in organizing the annual Mela.

The Lieutenant Governor also met representatives of various Kashmiri Pandit organisations, PM Package employees and civil society delegations. He listened to their concerns and assured them of the Administration's commitment towards ensuring their welfare.

The Lieutenant Governor was accompanied by Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Nalin Prabhat, Director General of Police; Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Jatin Kishore, Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal; Dr Arvind Karwani, Relief & Rehabilitation Commissioner; senior officials of police and civil administration and heads of Kashmiri Pandit organizations. (KNO)

'Kheer Bhawani

of the annual Kheer Bhawani Mela. NC President Farooq Abdullah while talking to the reporters, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said it is the blessings of Mata Kheer Bhawani that communal harmony and brotherhood are strengthening. He said people across Kashmir want Kashmiri Pandits to return and live peacefully with their fellow residents.

He said that necessary measures have been taken by the government, including the Centre, to facilitate their return and expressed hope that the community would soon be able to resettle in their native places.

The BJP leaders also paid obeisance at the holy shrine and offered prayers for lasting peace, communal harmony, prosperity, and the well-being of the people of Jammu & Kashmir and the nation.

Interacting with devotees, Sat Sharma extended his greetings to the Kashmiri Pandit community and all pilgrims participating in the annual mela. He highlighted the spiritual and cultural significance of the Kheer Bhawani Mela, describing it as a symbol of Kashmir's rich heritage and centuries-old traditions of faith and harmony.

Ashok Koul said the annual pilgrimage reflects the deep-rooted spiritual ethos of Jammu & Kashmir and reaffirmed the party's commitment to preserving and promoting the region's cultural and religious heritage. He appreciated the efforts of the administration and all stakeholders in ensuring smooth arrangements for the devotees.

The leaders prayed for peace, progress, and a brighter future for Jammu & Kashmir, while extending their best wishes to all devotees visiting the revered shrine.

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti said, "I am very happy to see our Kashmiri Pandit brothers and sisters arriving here. They should look forward to the future and forget what happened in the past. I believe young Kashmiri Pandit doctors should come to Kashmir and connect with people here. The J&K govt should provide them with facilities. Brotherhood should be maintained." (KNO)

Safety of Amarnath

the multi-layered security framework being established along the pilgrimage routes and at other vulnerable locations to safeguard pilgrims.

Prabhat directed officers to maintain a robust security grid and remain alert to any potential threat. He stressed the need for seamless coordination among all security agencies and called for joint operational planning to ensure effective response mechanisms during the pilgrimage.

"The safety and security of pilgrims remains our top priority," the DGP said, asking officers to enhance surveillance measures, intensify intelligence gathering and ensure effective deployment of personnel along the yatra routes.

He also appreciated the efforts of security forces in maintaining peace and stability in the region and urged all agencies to work in close coordination for the successful conduct of the pilgrimage.

J&K POLICE ISSUE TRAFFIC ADVISORY

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir Police issued a detailed traffic advisory for the yatra period, regulating vehicular movement on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway.

According to the advisory, no civilian vehicle travelling from Kashmir towards Jammu will be allowed to cross the Navyug Tunnel after 11:30 am, while vehicles travelling from Jammu towards Kashmir will not be permitted to cross the tunnel after 3 pm during the yatra period.

The advisory also notified cut-off timings at several locations in Kashmir. Vehicles heading towards Srinagar and Anantnag will have to cross Mir Bazar by 4 pm, while those travelling towards the Baltal base camp must cross the same point by 5 pm. At Pantha Chowk, the cut-off time for vehicles heading towards Ganderbal and Baramulla has been fixed at 3 pm, while vehicles moving towards Anantnag must cross before 3 pm.

Similarly, vehicles travelling towards Manigam and north Kashmir will have to cross Shadipora by 3:30 pm, while those heading towards Srinagar must do so before 1 pm. At Manigam, the cut-off time for vehicles bound for Baltal has been fixed at 5 pm, while those travelling towards Srinagar and north Kashmir must cross before 12 noon.

Police advised tourists, pilgrims and local commuters to plan their journeys accordingly, follow instructions issued by traffic authorities and remain updated through official advisories during the yatra period. (KNO)

Carry your brilliance

the classrooms to meet the future challenges. "We are living in an era of constant change. AI and modern technologies are reshaping our classrooms. It's an opportunity for students and teachers to rise higher, think more deeply, and take bolder steps. Let's embrace the challenge and shape the future," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said the ongoing transformation in every sector calls on students to pursue excellence, progress, and courage. The Lieutenant Governor observed that the future ahead will be rapid, unprecedented, and revolutionary.

"In the near future we will witness dramatic

change in both classrooms and workplaces. Many old jobs will become irrelevant, while new opportunities will emerge. In such a scenario, I believe brilliance is measured not only by numbers or medals but also by futuristic thinking and the ability to imagine solutions. Brilliance means the relentless pursuit of improvement. It means refusing to be satisfied with the status quo. It means a commitment to become better, a passion to create something new, the courage to embrace change, and the confidence and hope to move forward even amid uncertainty," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Addressing the teachers, the Lieutenant Governor said that they must adapt to these changing times because teacher's role is no longer limited to covering the syllabus. He said teachers must cultivate lifelong learning skills in students.

"You must encourage their creativity and inspire values such as compassion and empathy. Rather than preparing students to compete with machines, teachers should guide them to become more humane so that they grow into people who are both sensitive and strong. The future belongs to those who pair skills with sensitivity and values. I am confident that skilled, empathetic students will not only adapt to the modern world but will help shape it. They will be the innovators who build new technologies, the leaders who guide communities, and the citizens who uphold compassion and justice," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi, Chairperson, J&K Waqf Board; Yasha Mudgal, Commissioner Secretary Cooperatives Department; Ram Niwas Sharma, Commissioner Secretary School Education; Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Shreya Singhal, Director Information; Dr. G.V. Sundeep Chakravarthy, SSP Srinagar; Uday Sinha, Group Consulting Editor, Amar Ujala; Shri Abhishek Raj, Editor, J&K, Amar Ujala; senior officials, team members of Amar Ujala Group, teachers and students were present. (KNO)

Rain, hailstorm

hailstorms, while strong winds accompanied the rainfall in several areas.

According to data released by the Meteorological Department, Srinagar recorded 2.2 mm rainfall between 8:30 am and 5:30 pm on Monday. Pahalgam received 2.8 mm rainfall, while Gulmarg recorded 4.4 mm during the same period.

The rainfall brought temperatures down across Jammu and Kashmir, with most stations recording maximum temperatures below normal.

TEMPERATURES SETTLE BELOW NORMAL

Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 26.6 degrees Celsius, which was 2.6 degrees below normal, while the minimum settled at 15.4 degrees Celsius. Qazigund recorded a maximum of 25.2 degrees Celsius, Kokernag 25.3 degrees Celsius and Kupwara 26.5 degrees Celsius.

Pahalgam, one of the coldest stations in the Valley, recorded a maximum temperature of 21.6 degrees Celsius, while Gulmarg registered 17 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded a maximum temperature of 35.8 degrees Celsius, 1.8 degrees below normal. Banihal recorded 24.7 degrees Celsius, Batote 25 degrees Celsius, Katra 32.2 degrees Celsius and Baderwah 22.5 degrees Celsius.

MET ISSUES ADVISORY

The Meteorological Department advised people to remain indoors during thunderstorms and lightning activity and stay away from electric poles, overhead wires, loose structures and old trees. Authorities also urged suspension of boating and shikara operations during periods of thunderstorms and gusty winds.

The department said brief intense showers at isolated places could trigger minor flash floods and mudslides, particularly in vulnerable areas of Kashmir and parts of Ramban, Banihal and Kishtwar districts. People have been advised to stay away from nullahs and streams during periods of heavy rainfall.

The weather department forecast generally dry weather from June 23 to June 26, although brief spells of light rain, thundershowers and gusty winds cannot be ruled out at a few places.

From June 27 to June 29, the Union Territory is expected to witness partly to generally cloudy weather with light rain, brief intense showers, thunderstorms and gusty winds at scattered places.

A fresh spell of rain and thundershowers, accompanied by brief heavy showers, thunderstorms and gusty winds at many places, is likely between June 30 and July 1, the department said.

Farmers and orchardists have been advised to undertake spraying operations during the early morning hours when weather conditions are expected to remain favourable. (KNO)

Repeated hailstorms

weather-related losses this season. According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Shangus, Sheikhgund, Wangam, Krad and adjoining villages in Anantnag district were stuck with severe hailstorm this afternoon, damaging crops across large stretches of agricultural land.

Residents said the sudden weather

disturbance left farmers worried about the fate of their produce and appealed to the administration to immediately assess the losses and extend relief to affected families.

In Tral's Aripal belt, including Satora and surrounding villages, heavy hailstorm activity continued for a considerable period, pelting orchards and farmlands with large hailstones. Residents reported significant damage to apple orchards, vegetable fields and other standing crops. Orchard owners said the hailstones bruised young apples and damaged tree foliage, which could adversely affect both the quality and quantity of the harvest this year.

"Many farmers had pinned their hopes on a good season after months of hard work. However, the sudden hailstorm has caused substantial losses and left growers anxious about their livelihoods," said a local orchardist from the area.

Similar reports emerged from Buchroo in Kulgam district, where heavy rainfall accompanied by hailstorm activity damaged crops and triggered concern among farming communities. Residents expressed fears that recurring extreme weather events could severely impact agricultural production and household incomes in the region.

The latest spell of hailstorms comes amid a worrying trend of frequent weather disturbances across Kashmir. Over the past several weeks, multiple districts, particularly in south Kashmir, have witnessed repeated hailstorms that have left thousands of orchardists and farmers counting losses. The recurring incidents have raised concerns about the increasing vulnerability of Kashmir's horticulture sector to erratic weather patterns.

Horticulture remains the backbone of the rural economy in large parts of Kashmir, with apple cultivation providing livelihood support to thousands of families. Growers say repeated hailstorms not only reduce fruit production but also affect fruit quality, forcing them to sell their produce at lower market rates.

Farmers and residents from the affected areas have urged the administration to immediately deploy revenue and horticulture department teams for a comprehensive damage assessment. They have also demanded adequate compensation and long-term measures such as subsidised hail-protection nets to safeguard orchards from recurring weather-related disasters.

They have demanded the immediate implementation of the crop insurance scheme in the UT. (KNO)

Every lost hour

decision-making while reducing the brain's ability to clear harmful waste products linked to neurodegenerative diseases. It can also increase blood pressure, heart rate, inflammation, and the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Sleep deficiency adversely affects the pancreas and metabolism by reducing insulin sensitivity, increasing cravings, and raising the likelihood of obesity and Type 2 diabetes. It weakens the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to infections and reducing vaccine effectiveness.

The respiratory system is also impacted, with poor sleep increasing vulnerability to respiratory infections and worsening chronic lung conditions such as asthma. Hormonal imbalances caused by inadequate sleep can elevate stress hormone levels, reduce growth hormone production, lower testosterone levels in men, and contribute to menstrual irregularities in women.

The advisory warns that chronic sleep deprivation significantly increases the risk of mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety disorders, burnout, substance abuse, cognitive decline, and even dementia. Research cited in the advisory suggests that even a single night of poor sleep can increase emotional reactivity by nearly 60 per cent, making individuals more vulnerable to stress, conflict, and emotional instability.

Among the most common consequences of insufficient sleep are persistent morning fatigue, poor concentration, mood swings, increased appetite, weight gain, reduced work performance, weakened immunity, and an elevated risk of hypertension and diabetes.

To promote healthy sleep, the advisory recommends following the "Golden Sleep Rules", which include maintaining a regular sleep schedule, going to bed preferably before 10:30-11:00 PM, ensuring a dark and quiet sleeping environment, engaging in regular physical activity, and obtaining exposure to morning sunlight.

People have also been advised to avoid heavy meals late at night, excessive consumption of tea, coffee, and nicotine during evening hours, unnecessary use of sleeping pills without medical advice, excessive screen exposure before bedtime, and the habit of routinely sleeping after midnight.

Reiterating the importance of sleep as a cornerstone of public health, Dr Khan said, "Sleep is not a luxury—it is a biological necessity. Every hour of lost sleep is a debt paid by the brain, heart, metabolism, immunity, and mental health."

Health experts believe that improving sleep habits can play a significant role in preventing chronic diseases, enhancing mental well-being, boosting productivity, and improving overall quality of life. (KNO)

NTA dismisses video claiming paper leak as 'fake'

Says NEET re-exam successfully held

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 22: The National Testing Agency (NTA) has termed as fake a video being circulated on social media claiming that the NEET-UG 2026 paper was leaked.

In a statement on X, the agency said the exam was conducted successfully under comprehensive security and surveillance.

"NTA's attention has been drawn to a fabricated video being circulated on social media regarding NEET (UG) 2026. The video is fake and the claims it makes are false," the statement said.

"The video is FAKE and the claims it makes are false," it said. The agency said manufacturing and deliberately circulating such misinformation to defraud or alarm students was a "serious offence." "NTA, with the support of IAC and law-enforcement agencies, is taking action against those responsible for originating this content," the agency said.

The NTA appealed to students, parents and the public to rely only on the official website and the agency's verified social media handles for information and not to amplify such material. "Our 20 lakh-plus aspirants



deserve a calm and fair process," it said.

More than 20 lakh medical aspirants took a second shot at the NEET re-exam on Sunday after the original test was cancelled due to paper leaks, an issue that became a hot potato for the government and triggered a popular protest movement.

Abhishek Singh, the Director General of the National Testing Agency (NTA), which has been receiving flak following the paper leak, said a "whole-of-government" approach helped it to conduct the mammoth exercise in record time.

In a statement, NTA said more than 20 lakh candidates

appeared for the NEET (UG) 2026 re-examination across 5,440 centres in India and 14 centres abroad. The exam was conducted in 13 languages, including Hindi and English.

"This was not the NTA acting alone. It was Team Bharat - a chain of people across the country who showed up so that, for each candidate, the only thing that mattered that morning was the paper in front of them," the agency said.

"In all, around 7 lakh officials - police teams, observers and examination staff - were mobilised across India to conduct this examination, and it was done in a record 37 days.

NTA is especially grateful to the experts from academic

institutions across the country who gave their personal time to help prepare multiple sets of question papers," the NTA said.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan reviewed arrangements for the smooth conduct of the re-examination at the NTA headquarters in Delhi's Okhla.

"NTA apprised the minister of the logistical and technical arrangements put in place for the efficient and transparent conduct of the examination," the Ministry of Education said.

The NTA said extensive arrangements were made for all candidates, including more than 10,000 Persons with Disabilities.

"Special arrangements were put in place for around 81 candidates with medical conditions, among them a child who had been in a road accident, and a child undergoing chemotherapy, who were determined not to miss an exam they had prepared for years," it said.

The agency said Aadhaar-based biometric and face authentication, CCTV surveillance, jammers and two-layer frisking with the support of state police were deployed at examination centres.

"Command and control centres for CCTV monitoring were established at the national level

- at the NTA and at the Ministry of Education, at 34 Centrally Funded Institutions of the Department of Higher Education, in every State, and at District Collectorate," it said.

"There were some minor reports regarding people coming with wrong admit cards, people coming with some forged admit cards at a few places; impersonation cases were also found out," NTA DG Abhishek Singh said.

"At a few places, somebody was trying to take a mobile phone; action has been taken on that because that's the purpose of putting frisking, when you put CCTV cameras, when you put handheld metal detectors, to not allow any unfair means... and there were a few people who were trying to do that, but they were not able to," he said.

While a probe is underway into the alleged paper leak, the newly formed Cockerroach Janta Party, led by Abhijeet Dipke, which started as an online campaign, has been holding protests in the country, demanding the education minister's resignation.

The NTA said the conduct of the exam drew on the support of CAPF and several central ministries.

Don't want to open pandora's box with regard to proceedings of collegium: SC

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 22: "We don't want to open a pandora's box with regard to the proceedings of the collegium," the Supreme Court said on Monday while refusing to entertain a petition filed by a judicial officer from Himachal Pradesh.

The petitioner had approached the apex court alleging that names of officers junior to him were recommended for appointment as judges of the Himachal Pradesh High Court.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Joydalya Bagchi observed these are matters where ultimately it is the subjective satisfaction of the collegium of the high court.

"Can on the judicial side, the Supreme Court say to the collegium you do this or you do that and you consider the name? It can't be done," the bench said.

"On the judicial side, we don't want to open a pandora's box with regard to the proceedings of the high court collegium or the Supreme Court collegium," it said.

Senior advocate Balbir Singh, appearing for the petitioner, said the petitioner is the senior-most judicial officer in the state and has around 10 more years of service left.

The bench observed that merely because someone is high in seniority does not mean that he is entitled to be recommended for elevation.

After the top court showed its disinclination in entertaining the petition, the petitioner said he would withdraw the plea with liberty to seek appropriate reliefs before the



competent authority of the high court on the administrative side or seek remedy on the judicial side.

The bench disposed of the matter subject to the liberty as sought.

The apex court collegium had on June 2 approved the proposal for appointment of three judicial officers -- Chirag Bhanu Singh, Bhupesh Sharma and Yogesh Jaswal -- as judges of the Himachal Pradesh High Court.

During the hearing on Monday, the bench observed there was nothing on record to indicate that the high court collegium had rejected the petitioner's name.

"There is no rejection of your candidature at this stage. Please wait for sometime," the bench said.

The top court observed that recommendation made by the high court collegium has already been approved by the Supreme Court collegium.

It said the petitioner's name may have been under consideration or it may have been deferred and he need to have some patience.

"The narration of events which you have given clearly indicates that there was consideration," the bench observed.

President Murmu wraps up 5-day MP tour



PTI

Gwalior, Jun 22: President Droupadi Murmu on Monday concluded her five-day visit to Madhya Pradesh, departing from Gwalior after spending a day at Kuno National Park, home to the reintroduced cheetahs.

Murmu visited the Kuno National Park, located in MP's Sheopur district, on Sunday and took a tour of the Cheetah Command and Control Centre. She was briefed on the monitoring and tracking mechanisms for the big cats.

She also viewed an exhibition showcasing

the progress achieved under the cheetah reintroduction project so far.

On Monday, the President left from Kuno for Gwalior, from where she departed for Delhi in an Indian Air Force plane, an official said.

Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel, several state ministers and senior officials bid her farewell at Gwalior Airport.

During her state visit to Botswana in November 2025, Murmu had witnessed the symbolic donation of eight cheetahs, which were brought to Kuno in February this year.

The Project Cheetah, launched on September

17, 2022, aims to reintroduce the cheetah in India after its extinction in the country, embodying India's steadfast commitment to biodiversity restoration.

Under the project, the Kuno National Park has been developed as India's first cheetah reintroduction site, as it offers ideal habitat, abundant prey, and minimal human disturbance, as per officials.

The first batch of cheetahs was brought to the Kuno National Park from Namibia in September 2022, the second batch arrived from South Africa in February 2023, and the third batch was brought from Botswana in February 2026.

US notifies sale of support services for India's Apache helicopters, M777A2 howitzers

PTI

Washington, Jun 22: The US has formally notified the proposed sale of sustainment support services and related equipment for India's Apache helicopters and M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers at an estimated cost of USD 482.2 million.

The Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), which administers the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme of the US, issued the arms sales notification in the Federal Register on June 17.

On May 18, the Department of State informed the US Congress about the possible sales of services for Apache Helicopters and M777A2 ultra-light howitzers to India.

India inducted the M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers, procured from the US under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) route, to bolster its artillery capabilities, particularly in mountainous terrain.

The Indian Army also operates AH-64E Apache attack helicopters, regarded as among the world's most advanced combat helicopters, for precision strike



and battlefield support missions.

As per the notification, India has requested long-term sustainment support for its M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers.

"The following non-major defence equipment items will be included: ancillary items; spares; repair and return; training; technical assistance; field service representative; depot capability; and other related elements of logistics and programme support.

The estimated total cost is USD 230 million," the notification said.

In a separate notification, the Department of Defence said India has sought AH-64E Apache sustainment support services, US government and contractor engineering, technical and logistics support services, technical data and publications, personnel training, and other related logistics and programme support.

The estimated cost of the Apache support package is USD 198.2 million.

The principal contractors for the Apache support services deal will be Boeing Company and

Lockheed Martin, while BAE Systems, located in Cumbria, UK, will be the principal contractor for the M777 howitzer support programme.

The Department of Defence said the proposed sale of assistance for helicopters and howitzers will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the US by helping to strengthen the US-Indian strategic relationship.

It will also help improve the security of a major defence partner, which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia regions. The proposed sales will improve India's capability to meet current and future threats, strengthen its homeland defence, and deter regional threats. India will have no difficulty absorbing these articles and services into its armed forces, the Department of Defence said.

The proposed sales would not alter the basic military balance in the region and would have no adverse impact on US defence readiness, it said.

Stock markets rebound in early trade

Drop in crude oil prices, supportive global cues

PTI

Mumbai, Jun 22: Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded in early trade on Monday following a decline in crude oil prices and supportive global cues.

Fresh foreign fund inflows and buying in blue-chips Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank also added to markets' optimism.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 407.12 points to 77,210.02 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty surged 114.75 points to 24,129.95.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Reliance Industries, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank and HCL Tech



were among the major winners.

Titan, InterGlobe Aviation, Adani

Ports and ITC were among the laggards. Brent crude, the global oil

benchmark, traded 1.50 per cent lower at USD 79.36 per barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 4,859.07 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Shanghai's SSE Composite index quoted higher, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index trade lower.

US markets were closed on Friday for Juneteenth holiday.

The US and Iran have agreed on a roadmap aimed at reaching a final agreement within 60 days following two days of talks at the Swiss resort of Burgenstock, according to a joint

statement issued by mediators Pakistan and Qatar on Monday.

"Global cues remain supportive at the start of the week. While US markets were closed on Friday for Juneteenth, Thursday's strong rally in the Nasdaq and S&P 500, led by semiconductor stocks, continue to provide a positive undertone despite the Federal Reserve maintaining a cautious stance," Rajesh Palviya, Head of Research, Axis Direct, said.

On Friday, the Sensex dropped 607.08 points, or 0.78 per cent, to settle at 76,802.90. The Nifty declined 154.90 points, or 0.64 per cent, to end at 24,013.10.

TN CM turns 52, PM, leaders greet him

PTI

Chennai, Jun 22: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay turned 52 on Monday, the first memorable occasion after he took up the reins as CM in May.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former Chief Ministers - M K Stalin and Edappadi K Palaniswami - and BJP state chief Nainar Nagenthiran were among the numerous leaders who extended their greetings to Vijay.

Wishes also poured in from various quarters greeting the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam founder, who upset the political fortunes of the Dravidian majors in the April 23 Assembly election and succeeded in forming a coalition government in the state for the first time, with the support of DMK's allies.

In his message on X, the Prime Minister said, "birthday greetings to the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Thiru C. Joseph Vijay Ji. I pray for his long and healthy life. @TVKJVijayHQ."

DMK president Stalin greeted Vijay and said, "I wish you the strength to continue to serve the public with joy and good health."

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami wished Vijay "a long life and good health in serving the people."

Posting a photograph of Vijay, BJP chief Nainar Nagenthiran wished the chief minister a long life, abundant health to continue to excel in public service.

Makkal Needhi Maiam president and MP Kamal Haasan, an ally of the opposition DMK, also greeted Vijay on the occasion.

In his message, TMC (Moopanar) founder G K Vasani said Vijay, who brought about a transformation in Tamil Nadu politics and won the hearts of the people, must provide good governance reflecting the thoughts of the people.

"And may the Almighty support you in this. I pray to God that your efforts for the welfare of the people will be successful and that you will live long and with good health," Vasani said.

AIADMK state women's wing deputy secretary Gayathri Raghuram said on X, "I admire your determination, dedication, and self-belief. On your special day, I wish you a very happy birthday. I pray that you achieve your goals of eradicating corruption, ensuring women's safety, and fostering the development and growth of Tamil Nadu. May you continue to help the poor and the needy and serve the people with sincerity and compassion."

Ministers Aadhav Arjuna and Keerthana and scores of TVK leaders and cadres too greeted Vijay. Chandrasekar Joseph Vijay, a celebrated actor, was born on June 22, 1974 to director and film maker Chandrasekar and Shoba. Two years after launching the TVK, Vijay piloted his party to win 107 seats in the 234-member Assembly.

US-Iran talks end in Switzerland, mediators say; 60-day deal framework takes shape

REUTERS

Obbuerger (Switzerland), Jun 22: The first round of talks between high-ranking U.S. and Iranian officials in Switzerland ended Monday, mediators said, after a tense opening marked by Tehran's announcement it had again closed the Strait of Hormuz and U.S. President Donald Trump repeating his threats to resume attacks on Iran.

A joint statement from mediating nations Qatar and Pakistan said the U.S. and Iran agreed to a roadmap toward a final deal within 60 days. Technical talks will continue for the rest of the week in the Qatari-owned Swiss mountain resort of Buergenstock, according to the statement, which was released by the Qatari foreign ministry.

The parties agreed to a mechanism to end the fighting in Lebanon and opened a communications line to help ensure safe passages for commercial ships through the contested strait, the statement said. U.S. Vice President JD Vance began talks with Iranian officials on Sunday under the terms of a memorandum of understanding reached last week to extend a tenuous ceasefire from April for at least another 60 days. The discussions continued until the early hours of Monday.

In a post on social media, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said his country had secured waivers for oil and petrochemical exports, the release of some frozen assets and the launch of a reconstruction and development plan for Iran. The White House had no immediate comment when asked if high-level talks had wrapped for now. Just before talks officially began on Sunday, Fox News reported that Trump said he told Iranian officials "you won't have a country" if they tried to close the strait again. Trump also reiterated an earlier threat that the U.S. would take over the waterway and possibly charge a toll of its own, Fox



Delegation staff members meet in the lobby on the day of a quadrilateral meeting between the U.S., Iran, Pakistan, and Qatar at the Lake Lucerne Summit, aimed at advancing a deal to end the Middle East conflict, at Buergenstock Resort Lake Lucerne, near Stansstad, Switzerland, June 21, 2026.

News said. Trump said he agreed to last week's memorandum of understanding to avert a global economic depression from high oil prices caused by the strait's closure. Oil prices had tumbled over the past week to levels unseen since the war started on February 28 with U.S.-Israeli attacks on Iran. After the joint statement, Brent crude futures fell further, dropping more than \$1 to \$79.44 a barrel.

U.S. and Iranian sources provided separate accounts of the discussions in Switzerland.

Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency, citing an informed source, said that after Trump's threats became public, the Iranian delegation refused to return to the room where talks were held, though messages were still being traded

via Pakistani and Qatari mediators. According to Tasnim's source, Iranians said that the start of negotiations on nuclear matters required the delivery of other parts of the MOU, including the release of frozen assets and U.S. waivers authorizing Iranian oil exports. "The Iranians never left and are still here meeting and negotiating deep into the night," a U.S. diplomat involved in the talks told Reuters. "We've talked about the Strait, Lebanon, nuclear issues, and details of implementing the MOU, among other topics."

The agreement calls for reopening the Strait of Hormuz, a choke point for global energy shipments, and ending all hostilities, including in Lebanon, where Israel has continued to launch deadly strikes

as Iranian ally Hezbollah fires at Israeli targets.

Iran, arguing that the U.S. had failed to meet its commitment to halt fighting in Lebanon, said on the weekend that it had again stopped maritime traffic through the strait and that Sunday's talks would not cover substantive issues such as Iran's nuclear programme.

At the talks in Switzerland, where U.S. and Iranian officials met in the presence of Qatari mediators, Vance played down the impact of violence in Lebanon, saying progress had been made towards ending hostilities there.

"These things are always a little bit messy," he said.

Back in the United States, Trump threatened to resume attacks on Iran if it did not rein in its allies.

"Iran must immediately stop their highly paid PROXIES in Lebanon from causing trouble," Trump wrote on social media, apparently referring to Hezbollah. "If they don't, we'll hit Iran very hard again, just like we did last week, only harder!!!"

Even as Trump was threatening Iran, Vance told reporters the U.S. president had "asked us to turn over a new leaf to transform our relationship with the people of Iran." A U.S. diplomat late Sunday said discussions included "clarifying some of the confusing messaging from Iran on the Strait and building deconfliction mechanisms to ensure the Strait will remain fully open."

Iran cites Lebanon as reason to close Strait

Despite the announcement of a new ceasefire in Lebanon on Friday, there has been scant sign of an end to fighting there. Iran said on Saturday that as a result, it had again shut the strait, whose closure for nearly four months caused the biggest disruption of global energy supplies in history.

Five vessels passed the strait on Sunday, a sharp drop from the 26 ships spotted a day earlier, data from analytics firm Kpler showed. The data may exclude vessels that switch off their transponders while travelling in the Gulf.

Sunday appeared to be the quietest day in Lebanon for some time, with no reports of major violence by nightfall, after two days of heavy Israeli strikes and fire from Hezbollah fighters on Israeli positions.

More than 1 million people have fled their homes in Lebanon since Israel invaded in March to pursue Hezbollah fighters who fired across the border in support of Tehran.

Reuters journalists in southern Lebanon on Sunday saw some of the heaviest traffic since the memorandum was signed, with residents returning to their homes. Some stood beside cars backed up on the highway and waved Hezbollah flags.

UK PM Keir Starmer announces resignation



REUTERS

London, Jun 22: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Monday he would resign, promising to do everything he could to see an orderly transfer of power.

Starmer said he'll step down as UK Labour Party leader, will remain UK prime minister until successor chosen.

The pound eased on Monday, as speculation mounted that Starmer could set out a timetable for his departure imminently, paving the way for Andy Burnham to become Britain's seventh leader since the Brexit vote a decade ago.

Sterling, which has lost some 3 percent since pressure on Starmer began to heat up in February, was down 0.2 percent at \$1.321. Britain already has the highest borrowing costs in the Group of Seven wealthy nations due to its high debt and interest payments, years of anaemic economic growth, its struggles to cut spending and the need to invest in areas like defense. The threat to Starmer, whose popularity among voters has nose-dived over his handling of the economy, ramped up on Friday when Burnham, the former Greater Manchester mayor, decisively won a parliamentary election to return to Westminster.

"The most important question relates to Mr. Burnham's approach to fiscal policy, his pick of Chancellor and whether he will stick to the fiscal rules," Nomura economist George Buckley said. The options market

shows traders are willing to pay more to hedge against volatility in the pound in the coming weeks than they were on Friday.

Key for investors is the UK gilt market, where yields at around 4.85 percent are not far off their highest since the 2008 financial crisis, meaning Britain must pay more for its medium-term borrowing needs than any other developed nation.

Repeated political crises and concern over Britain's stretched finances have made investors wary of gilts, which are prone to far higher volatility than many other government bonds.

Burnham is viewed as being more left-leaning than Starmer and although

he has said he will stick to incumbent finance minister Rachel Reeves' tight fiscal rules, investors will need to see proof. "Burnham has said that he would respect fiscal rules. However, it is not obvious where the money for any additional spending will come from. Taxes have reached a stage where further rise (s)... would be counterproductive. Efficiency savings look good on paper, but never realistically work," Jefferies strategist Mohit Kumar said. "We have stayed away from the long end of the gilts curve, have steepeners in our portfolio and have been underweight sterling. We are maintaining our view and expect further volatility in the UK long end over the coming days," he said, referring to a position that assumes shorter-dated bonds will perform better than longer-dated ones, given the concern about Britain's long-term finances.

China hits back at US sanctions on tech giants, restricting its exports to American defence firms

AP

Beijing, Jun 22: China on Monday announced sanctions on 10 American military-related companies in response to a recent US move that bars some leading Chinese tech companies from defense contracts.

The Commerce Ministry said that Chinese companies would be blocked from exporting "dual-use" items

to the 10 companies, which include military drone makers and some involved in rare earth mining. Dual use refers to goods that can have military as well as non-military applications.

The ministry said the export ban was both to safeguard China's national security and in response to what it called the US government's "wrongful

expansion of its so-called List of Chinese Military Companies".

Separately, the Finance Ministry said that government entities would be prohibited from buying products from 46 American companies including Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Missiles & Defence, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Syria president denies wanting to intervene in Lebanon after Trump remarks

AFP

Damascus, Jun 22: Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa denied that his country sought to intervene militarily in Lebanon where Israel and Hezbollah are at war, after US President Donald Trump repeatedly suggested Damascus could get involved.

"We are looking for economic channels between Lebanon and Syria, not military ones," Sharaa said in an interview broadcast on television channel Al Mashhad. On Sunday, Trump told Fox



News he was "disappointed Israel can't put Hezbollah away," adding in reference to the fight

against the militant group: "I'm close to giving it over to Syria."

Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2 with rocket fire at Israel to avenge the killing of its leader's supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes days earlier.

Israel responded with airstrikes and a ground invasion.

An Iran-U.S. deal signed this week on ending the regional conflict includes Lebanon, where fighting has paused since Saturday evening.

Lakshya, Tanvi lead Indian challenge at US Open Super 300

PTI

Fullerton (USA), Jun 22: Seasoned campaigner Lakshya Sen and rising star Tanvi Sharma will lead India's challenge at the US Open Super 300 badminton tournament beginning here on Tuesday.

India will have a sizeable presence across the singles draws, including former world championships silver-medallist Kidambi Srikanth and a seven-strong women's team.

World No. 14 and Paris Olympics semifinalist Sen has been seeded second and drawn to face Belgium's Julien Carraggi in the opening round.

Placed in the opposite half of the draw is top seed and world No. 6 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei, who headlines the men's singles field.

Sen enjoys a 5-4 head-to-head record against Chou, having won their last two meetings, and could run into him if he goes all the way.

The Indian will be eager to bounce back after a disappointing first-round exit at the Indonesia Open earlier this month.

Former world championships silver-medallist Srikanth is the other seeded Indian in men's singles.

Seeded fifth, he will open against Chinese Taipei's Liao Jhuo-Fu.

India also have Saneeth Dayanand in the main draw. The unseeded shuttler is set to begin his campaign against fourth seed Yuda Okimoto of Japan.

Eng docked 12 WTC points for slow over rate in Oval Test against NZ



REUTERS

London, Jun 22: England's dreams of a maiden appearance in the World Test Championship (WTC) final suffered a blow after it was docked 12 points for maintaining slow over rate in the comprehensive defeat by New Zealand at The Oval on Sunday.

New Zealand levelled the three-Test series with a 253-run victory against England, who was found 12 overs short of the target. The home side has been fined 50% of its match fees but losing 12 WTC points

will sting more.

"England interim captain Joe Root admitted the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, eliminating the need for a formal hearing," the governing International Cricket Council said in a statement.

England remains seventh in the WTC standings but its points percentage dropped from 34.72 to 26.38.

The top two teams in the standings, positions currently held by Australia and South Africa, will face off in the WTC final at Lord's next year.

Show Timings

TUESDAY • 23 JUNE

OBSESSION (ENGLISH) (A)
11:10 AM

MAIN VAAPAS AALUNGA (HINDI) (U/A16+)
11:40 AM, 02:00 PM, 04:15 PM

COCKTAIL 2(A)
HINDI ATMOS
01:30 PM, 07:30 PM
HINDI
11:00 AM, 03:15 PM, 05:20 PM

TOY STORY 5
3D ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES (U)
04:30 PM

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