

Public service delivery in J&K revamped with 'people first' approach: LG Sinha

Highlights historic transformations under PM Modi | Says inclusive dev revolution driven by 3-tier Panchayati Raj system | 'From 35 to 1,100, UT topped national e-service delivery rankings'

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 23: Highlighting historic transformations under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rule and the inclusive development revolution that was driven by the 3-tier Panchayati Raj system, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday said that public service delivery in Jammu and Kashmir stands revamped with a 'People First' approach.

Addressing the "Seva Se Samridhi: Regional Workshop on Panchayat-Led Service Delivery" at

SKICC here, the Lieutenant Governor, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said, "I believe Panchayat-led service delivery is one of the most important components of the governance system and a subject very close to my heart."

The Lieutenant Governor said Jammu and Kashmir lacked a fully functional three-tier Panchayati Raj system in the past, but significant efforts in recent years have empowered



local bodies through the transfer of funds, functions and functionaries. "District plans were prepared jointly with elected representatives, and development priorities identified at the grassroots level were implemented accordingly," he said, adding that locally-driven planning had enabled the execution of several impactful projects across villages.

Recalling the early days of his tenure, LG Sinha said governance in Jammu and Kashmir

was heavily dependent on the physical movement of files under the Darbar Move system. "When I came to Jammu and Kashmir in 2020, I witnessed nearly 154 trucks transporting government files from Srinagar to Jammu. I was surprised that in the digital age, administration was still dependent on the physical movement of files," he said. "The administration subsequently accelerated digitisation and shifted governance systems online, improving efficiency and

transparency."

He said, "In 2020, we set out to build a J&K where the government reaches the citizen's doorstep. With a 'People First' approach, we revolutionized public service delivery. From just 35 online services in 2020 to more than 1,100 by 2023, UT topped the national e-service delivery rankings.

LG Sinha said, "We made Panchayati Raj institutions the strongest voice and largest participants in governance. Through 'Block Diwas' and 'Back to Village' campaigns, we tried to ensure services reach doorsteps, infrastructure meets local needs, and policies flow from the grassroots up. We put the common person's aspirations at the core of administration. By ensuring accountability and citizen participation, we have translated a commitment to multi-generational change into reality within 3 years and rebuilt a powerful relationship of trust with citizens."

The Lieutenant Governor urged the participants from Haryana. | More on P6

Muharram, Amarnath Yatra

LG orders uninterrupted power, water, medical facilities, traffic plan

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 23: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday reviewed arrangements and traffic management plan for the Muharram processions and forthcoming Amarnath Yatra, slated to commence on July 3.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), LG Sinha chaired a high-level meeting here to assess the arrangements for Muharram across Jammu Kashmir.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the senior officials to ensure seamless security, traffic management, law and order and availability of public amenities.

He stressed the need for close coordination among all stakeholder departments to ensure timely and effective delivery of services.

Reviewing essential services, the Lieutenant Governor directed for uninterrupted power and potable water



supply, adequate sanitation and medical facilities, availability of ambulances and fire and emergency response teams at procession routes.

He directed the senior officials to remain accessible on the ground for real time monitoring and quick redressal of public grievances.

"All arrangements should be made with utmost sensitivity and efficiency. Senior Officers must remain available on the ground and maintain constant monitoring to ensure prompt response to any situation," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Anshul Garg apprised the meeting of the

arrangements in place by various departments for the smooth and peaceful observance of Muharram.

The Lieutenant Governor also directed the IGP Traffic to enforce a comprehensive traffic management plan for Muharram and the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra to ensure smooth movement of processions, Yatris and the general public.

The IGP Traffic was directed to conduct meetings with field officers and strengthen coordination with all stakeholder agencies for effective implementation of the traffic management plan.

The Lieutenant Governor also directed | More on P6

India slams Pak for peddling 'fabricated' claims on Kashmir

'Islamabad diverting attention from unrest in its occupied territories'

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 23: India on Tuesday strongly rejected remarks made by Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Jammu and Kashmir and the Indus Waters Treaty, saying the comments were aimed at diverting attention from Islamabad's internal problems and human rights record.

Responding to media queries, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said Pakistan's allegations against India were baseless and intended to shift focus away from issues confronting the neighbouring country.

"We have seen reports regarding these remarks. Such statements are desperate attempts by Pakistan to cover up its own failings and deflect attention from its human rights abuses," Jaiswal said.

He said India categorically rejected what he described as fabricated claims. The response came days after Asif criticised India's decision to keep the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance and warned that Pakistan could consider military action if it believed its water security was under threat.

India suspended the treaty following the April 22 terror attack in Pahalgam in which 26 people were killed. New Delhi has maintained that the decision will remain | More on P6

Parl panel on External Affairs meets LG, CM



Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 23: The parliamentary panel on External Affairs on Tuesday met Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah here.

On the second day of its visit, the panel arrived in Srinagar and interacted with armed forces personnel.

"Today, we had a very

fruitful interaction with the army officers and defence forces on how they are protecting our borders, the performance of the armed forces during Operation Sindoor, the major precautions they are taking, and their preparations for the future," said panel member and MP, Rajiv Shukla.

He added that the most important aspect discussed was how to take | More on P6

CM Omar pushes for all-weather rural connectivity

Reviews PMGSY-IV preparations, directs timely execution of projects

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 23: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday chaired a review meeting to assess the implementation and progress of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) across Jammu and Kashmir, with a particular focus on expediting ongoing works, improving rural connectivity and addressing bottlenecks affecting project execution.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, Additional Chief Secretary, Mining, Ashwini Kumar,



Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister, Dheeraj Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works (R&B), Anil Kumar Singh, Commissioner Secretary, Forest, Ecology & Environment, Sheetal Nanda, besides senior officers of the

Public Works Department and other concerned departments.

The Chief Minister reviewed the status of PMGSY works under various phases of the programme and took stock of the progress achieved in providing all-weather road connectivity to | More on P6

Reservation proposal Cabinet gives go-ahead to reply on RBA, EWS cuts

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Jun 23: The Cabinet on Tuesday cleared its response to the queries raised by the Union Government regarding the Cabinet's proposal on reservation, sources disclosed.

Sources told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the Cabinet, which met here under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, discussed the draft reply prepared by the Social Welfare Department, in consultation with Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, to queries raised by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on the Cabinet



proposal for reservation. "The Cabinet gave its go-ahead to the response," they said.

According to sources, the reply addresses the query on the justification for a three percent reduction in the Reserved Backward Area (RBA) category and a seven percent reduction

in the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) category.

The reply, sources added, justified the cut in RBA on the grounds that Ladakh is no longer part of Jammu & Kashmir and its areas were earlier covered under reservation in the RBA category.

It has also | More on P6

Ensure peaceful Amarnath Yatra: DGP directs security agencies

Calls for intensifying anti-terror ops; OGWs rounded up, searches in hr reaches, forests



Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 23: Directing security agencies to ensure peaceful conduct of forthcoming annual Amarnath Yatra, Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat on Tuesday called on the officers to strengthen the security grid and intensify anti-terror operations across Jammu

and Kashmir.

Chairing a high-level security review meeting at the Police Control Room (PCR) here, DGP Prabhat, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) reviewed the preparedness and arrangements slated for the Amarnath Yatra, slated to commence on July 3. "The meeting | More on P6

Army Chief Upendra Dwivedi assumes role of Honorary Colonel of J&K Rifles, Ladakh Scouts

Sajid Raina

New Delhi, Jun 23: Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi has assumed the appointment of Honorary Colonel of the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles and the Ladakh Scouts, reaffirming his long association with the two regiments known for their distinguished service in some of the country's most challenging operational environments.

The ceremonial investiture, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) took place during an event in which Lieutenant General M



P Singh, the serving Colonel of the Regiment, presented the ceremonial baton to General Dwivedi, symbolising the Army Chief's enduring connection with the | More on P6

Polish donor helps save Kashmiri child as SKIMS performs J&K's first unrelated stem cell transplant

Historic procedure gives new hope to patients with rare blood, immune disorders; public urged to register as stem cell donors

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jun 23: In a major breakthrough for advanced healthcare in Jammu and Kashmir, Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) has successfully carried out its first-ever Matched Unrelated Donor (MUD) Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation on a three-year-old child suffering from Hemophagocytic Lymphohistiocytosis (HLH), a rare and potentially fatal



disorder caused by severe immune system dysfunction.

The landmark transplant was made possible through

stem cells donated by a fully matched volunteer donor from Poland, identified through DKMS, one of the world's largest stem cell donor registries. In a significant humanitarian gesture, DKMS waived the donor procurement charges, easing the financial burden on the patient's family and facilitating access to the life-saving treatment.

Addressing a press conference, SKIMS Director and EOSG Prof M. Ashraf Ganie described the achievement as a

milestone in transplant medicine and a significant advancement in specialised healthcare services within Jammu and Kashmir. He congratulated the transplant team on the successful outcome and appealed to the public to actively participate in stem cell donor registration programmes.

"Many patients suffering from serious blood and immune disorders can only be cured through stem cell transplantation," Prof Ganie said, adding that | More on P6

RBI hosts awareness camp for MSME Entrepreneurs in Jammu



KT News Desk

JAMMU, JUNE 23: The Reserve Bank of India Tuesday organized an awareness camp for MSME Entrepreneurs at Jammu. As many as 160 MSME entrepreneurs participated in the awareness camp.

The event, as per an official statement, had thematic sessions covering key aspects of MSME development and financing including sessions on Unified Lending Interface; CBDC; TReDS; MSME Financing Landscape in UTs of J&K & Ladakh; Access to Credit – Challenges and innovative solutions; Government

Regional Director stated that the MSME sector remains the backbone of the Indian economy despite the recent West Asia crisis, contributing significantly to GDP, employment generation and exports. "There has been impressive growth in terms of the number of MSMEs registered on Udyam Dashboard over the past five year in UT of J&K," he highlighted. He further emphasized upon RBI's recent regulatory initiatives namely enhancement in collateral-free lending limit for micro and small enterprises from 10 lakh to 20 lakh and dispensing with the requirement of due diligence while on-boarding MSMEs on TReDS platforms. He encouraged MSMEs entrepreneurs to leverage upon the opportunities created by the evolving policy and financial ecosystem, scale up their enterprises and expand their market reach.

initiatives including MSME Health Clinic; Accessing formal credit, documentation, application processes etc.

The event was presided over by Regional Director, RBI, UTs of J&K and Ladakh and attended among others by MD & CEO, J&K Bank Amitava Chatterjee as 'Special Guest'; Joint Director, MSME-Development & Facilitation Office Jammu; Joint Director, DIC Jammu; DGM, NABARD; GM, J&K Bank; GM, UTLBC (J&K); Chairman, Jammu & Kashmir Grameen Bank; AGM, SBI; AGM, Canara Bank; Regional Heads from HDFC Bank, Axis Bank and ICICI Bank. In his keynote address, the

The MD & CEO-J&K Bank, while addressing the participants, highlighted the role of MSMEs as engines of livelihood, innovation and social mobility in the region. He also emphasized the importance of Udyam Registration and Udyam Assist Platform in formalization of MSMEs. He noted that thousands of enterprises, particularly nano-enterprises have benefited with the recently launched Mission Yuva scheme of UT of J&K.

DC Srinagar attends 74th Raising Day of Zila Sainik Welfare Board Srinagar



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 23: Zila Sainik Welfare Board Srinagar Tuesday observed its 74th Raising Day at Sainik Bhawan Srinagar for the welfare and resettlement of ex-servicemen, war widows and their wards, of South and Central Kashmir.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, who is also the President Sainik Board Srinagar was the chief guest on the occasion.

The programme, as per an official statement, witnessed the participation of senior Officers from the Army, Police and Civil Administration, besides a large gathering of ex-servicemen, war veterans, veer naris, war widows and their family members from across South and Central Kashmir. Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner lauded the invaluable contributions and sacrifices made by the armed forces in

safeguarding the nation's sovereignty and integrity. He reiterated the commitment of the District Administration towards ensuring the welfare and well-being of ex-servicemen, Veer Naaris, and their families, and emphasized the importance of extending all possible support to those who have served the nation with distinction.

During an interactive session, war veterans and war widows expressed their gratitude for the various welfare initiatives and support measures undertaken by the District Administration for the benefit of the ex-servicemen community and their dependents.

As part of the celebrations, wheelchairs were distributed among specially-abled wards of ex-servicemen to facilitate their mobility and improve their quality of life. Veer Naaris were also felicitated in recognition of their courage, resilience, and sacrifices.

DC Srinagar hands over Mobile TB Screening Van to District Tuberculosis Centre

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR JUNE 23: In a significant step towards strengthening tuberculosis detection and prevention efforts in the district, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Tuesday handed over a Mobile Screening Van (Ni-Kshay Vahaan) to the District Tuberculosis Centre, Srinagar, under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative of IDBI Bank.

The initiative has been undertaken as part of the TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 with the objective of enhancing tuberculosis screening, early diagnosis and awareness generation across the District.

After formally flagging off the Ni-Kshay Vahaan from the DC Office Complex, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the importance of early detection in the effective management and elimination of tuberculosis. He stated that the Mobile Screening Van, equipped with a Handheld X-Ray Unit and a TRU-NAAT Machine, will significantly strengthen the District's capacity for timely diagnosis and prompt initiation of treatment for TB patients. The DC said that the Van will be deployed across urban and rural areas of the District to conduct extensive TB screening and awareness campaigns, particularly targeting vulnerable and underserved populations. He emphasized that the initiative will play a pivotal role in expanding outreach services and ensuring that quality diagnostic facilities reach people at their doorstep.

Reaffirming the District Administration's commitment to the national goal of eliminating tuberculosis, the Deputy Commissioner stated that the deployment of the mobile screening unit would further accelerate efforts being undertaken under the TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan and contribute towards achieving the vision of a TB-free India. He said the initiative is expected to strengthen active case-finding activities and improve accessibility to diagnostic services across the district.

Mission YUVA

DC Kulgam presides Capacity Building Training Programme for motivators

KT News Desk

KULGAM, JUNE 23: Capacity Building Training Programme for Motivators engaged under Mission YUVA was organized Tuesday at the Auditorium Hall, Mini Secretariat Kulgam, in preparation for the successful implementation of Udyam Jagriti 5.0, a flagship awareness campaign under Mission YUVA.

The programme was presided over by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, who attended the programme as the Chief Guest.

The training was attended by Motivators, Business Help Desk (BHD) functionaries, Small Business Development Unit (SBDU) representatives, District Programme Manager (DPM), NRLM, Block Programme Managers (BPMs), Cluster Coordinators, Lead District Manager (LDM), Cluster Head, and officers from the Employment Department, all of whom will play a crucial role in the implementation of Udyam Jagriti 5.0 across the district. Addressing the participants, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the significance of Mission YUVA in fostering entrepreneurship and self-employment among the youth and women of Jammu & Kashmir.

DC Ganderbal reviews progress of Phase-I census activities

KT News Desk

GANDERBAL, JUNE 23: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore Tuesday chaired a review meeting to assess the progress of ongoing Phase-I Census activities across the district and emphasized the importance of ensuring accurate and comprehensive data collection.

During the meeting, a detailed review was conducted regarding the status of House Listing Blocks (HLBs), including the number of blocks completed and those pending. The progress of field-level enumeration and supervisory verification was also assessed. The DC stressed that the Census serves as an important foundation for planning and delivery of public services and therefore requires utmost accuracy and diligence. He directed Enumerators and Supervisors to ensure that information collected from households is entered carefully and verified thoroughly so that the data reflects the ground realities.

Special focus was laid on the enumeration of the migratory population. The meeting was



informed that additional House Listing Blocks have been created to facilitate their coverage and that enumeration work has already commenced. The DC directed concerned officers to ensure that every eligible household and individual is covered so that no segment of the population is left out.

Emphasizing the need for regular monitoring, the DC instructed field functionaries to closely supervise ongoing activities, review progress periodically and promptly address any issues arising during the exercise.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) MECHANICAL DIVISION CENTRAL KASHMIR

(NOTICE INVITING TENDERS)

e-NIT No:- R&B/MDCK/NIT/03 of 2026-27

Dated: 20-06-2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K UT e-tenders are invited in double-cover system (Technical and Financial) on percentage basis from OEM/experienced firms/ authorized dealers of OEM with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the below mentioned work:-

S.No	Name of work	Cost of Tender Documents (in Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (in Rs)	Advertised cost	Time of Completion (in months)	Tender Opening Authority	Position of Funds
1	Installation of Passenger Lift at Womens College Zakura	Rs 800	Rs 45,200	Rs 22,60,000	01 Months	Executive Engineer R&B Mechanical Division Central Kashmir	Available with intending department

Position of AAA: Administrative Approval accorded by Principal Srinagar Women's College Batpora, Zakura vide order No:-

18 of 2026, Dated: 06-05-2026.

Position of TS: Accorded by Executive Engineer, R&B Mechanical Division Central Kashmir vide order no. XENMC/Sgr/TS/02 . Dt:-20.06.2026

S.No	Particulars	Dated
1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	20-06-2026
2	Period of Downloading of bidder documents	From 20-06-2026 (17:00 hrs) To 10-07-2026 (16:00 hrs)
3	Bid Submission Start Date	From 20-06-2026 (17:00 hrs)
4	Bid Submission End Date	To 10-07-2026 (16:00 hrs)
5	Date and time of opening of Technical bid (online)	11-07-2026 at/after 12:00 hrs in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Mechanical Division Central Kashmir.
6.	Date and time of opening of Financial bid (online)	To be notified after technical bid evaluation is completed.

DIPK-2449/26
Dated: 23-06-2026

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
R&B Mechanical Division
Central Kashmir

GOVT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR (UT) OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, BARAMULLA

Subject: Provisional Shortlist of Candidates for Engagement of Business Help Desk (BHD) Coordinators positions on Contractual Basis for BHD Rohama and Sopore under Mission YUVA.

NOTICE

Whereas, the District Administration, Baramulla, vide Advertisement Notice No. DCB/PS/1275-79 dated 18.03.2026, invited online applications for engagement of 02 (Two) contractual positions of Business Help Desk (BHD) Coordinator for Business Help Desks Rohama and Sopore under Mission YUVA;

Whereas, against the aforesaid advertisement, a total of 209 online applications were received and, upon automated scrutiny conducted by the Directorate of Employment, MK, 122 candidates (including two duplicate entries) were declared qualified after rectification of the automation results;

Whereas, interaction/physical verification of original documents of the qualified candidates was conducted on 30.04.2026 and 11.05.2026, during which 81 candidates (including one duplicate entry) participated;

Whereas, the Oversight Selection Committee, during a meeting held on 16.06.2026, prepared the merit list of the candidates who participated in the interaction/physical document verification and, on the basis of the approved evaluation criteria, shortlisted 10 (Ten) candidates for the next stage of the selection process;

Now, therefore, in order of ensuring transparency in the selection process, the List of all applicants (List 1), List of Automation-Qualified Candidates (List 2), List of Candidates who appeared in the Interaction/Physical Document Verification (List 3), and the Provisional Shortlist of Candidates (List 4) are hereby placed in the public domain and are available on the official website of the District Administration, Baramulla, for information of all concerned.

Objections, if any, with regard to the shortlist shall be submitted along with supporting documentary evidence, in the Office of Deputy Director Employment, Baramulla (member secretary) within 03 working days from the date of issuance of this notice. Objections received after the stipulated period or without supporting documentary evidence shall not be entertained.

In case, no objection is received within the stipulated period, or the objections received are duly disposed of, the shortlisted candidates shall be considered for the next stage of the selection process, i.e., interview, in accordance with the approved selection procedure.

Sd/-
Deputy Commissioner,
Baramulla.

No: Adcb/yuva/2026-27/842-46
Dated: 20.06.2026

DIPK-2454/26
Dated: 23-06-2026

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PUBLIC WORKS (R&B) DIVISION AWANTIPORA

Email: Email: rb-awantipora@jk.gov.in

NO: T-1/EEA/2239-44 Dated: 23/06/2026

EXTENSION NOTICE

1. Macadamization of Road from SDH Tral to Pinglish
2. Macadamization of Dhankard Road i/c IR Chewa Ullar and School link Mandoora.
3. Macadamization of MTI Link Road i/c Sikh Basti Road Bajwani and Shairabad Dhankard Road.
4. Macadamization of Link Roads from Batagund Road to Medical shop of Nazir Ahmad Sheikh including Peer Mohalla Kuchmullah Tral
5. Macadamization of Lurrow Jageer to Seer.
6. Macadamization of Gulsharpora Gurdwara Link i/c IR Batagund & IR K hulbagh.
7. Macadamization of Gamraz Arigam Road.
8. Macadamization of Road from Jamia Masjid to Panchayat Ghar at Lalpora Kahlil.
9. Macadamization of Panner Kathwar Gujjar Basti Road.
10. Macadamization of Internal roads Pampore Town.
11. Macadamization of Yangwani Laribal Road incl. Yangwani Army Camp.
12. Macadamization of IR Aripal and IR Satoora i/c Masjid Link Satoora.

Reference:-
This office e-NIT No. 20/EEA/R&B of 2026
This office e-

The critical dates for the above noted Work is hereby extended as under:

1	Bid Submission End Date	01-07-2026 up to 4. 00 P.M
2	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	02-07-2026 up to 12.00 P.M

All other terms & Conditions shall remain same as per above mentioned NIT.

Sd/-
Technical officer

NIT No.21/EEA/R&B of -27/1551-61
Dated: 02-06-2026.

DIPK-2447/26
Dated: 23-06-2026

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
R&B Division Awantipora

‘Middle-stage meltdown in J&K schools’

■ Ranks among lowest performers

RIYAZ BHAT

Srinagar, Jun 23: Alarm bells are ringing for ‘middle-stage students’ of Jammu and Kashmir as the scores place it among the ‘lowest-performing regions’.

While the official documents reveal that the national averages already paint a concerning picture of systemic issues, the Union Territory’s consistent struggle to lift student performance from the foundational years through middle school suggests that current strategies are failing to halt a downward trajectory.

The official documents reveal that there are notable differences in performance across States and UTs.

“When compared with the Foundational and Preparatory Stage results, a few



States, such as Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan, have consistently ranked among the better performers, suggesting strong systems and the ability to maintain learning levels over time,” it reads. “On the other hand, States like Jharkhand, Gujarat, and Jammu and Kashmir have remained in the lower group across all stages, pointing to challenges that need sustained, long-term attention.” The documents further said these patterns are consistent with the findings from the foundational and middle stages.

It also said that states that perform strongly in the early grades tend to maintain their advantage in later years, while those with weaker outcomes at the start continue to struggle as students’ progress. “The national averages are also a cause

for concern, pointing to systemic challenges that extend beyond the lowest-performing states,” it reads.

In the previous week, KNO reported that Jammu and Kashmir ranks near the bottom of the ‘high-burden’ secondary school drop-out list, recording a dropout rate significantly lower than most of the states in its category.

The official documents in this regard reveal that Jammu and Kashmir had a dropout rate of 12.9 percent at secondary level.

“High rates are further observed in Telangana with 13.2 percent, Jammu & Kashmir with 12.9 percent, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu at 12.5 percent each, and Nagaland with 12.1 percent. Maharashtra 11.5 percent, Sikkim with 11.4 percent, and Tripura at 11.3 percent mark the lower end of this high-burden group,” it reads—(KNO)

Delegations call on LG Sinha



KT News Desk

Srinagar, June 23: Rajesh Dhar, Administrative Manager, Indian Cricket Team called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday. Dhar was accompanied by Smt. Kirti Dhar, Working Committee Member of Jammu Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA). Vipen Kumar, Chairman, All Jammu Based Reserved Category Employees Association Kashmir (AJBRCEAK), called Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

A delegation of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra Welfare Society led by Shri Anil Gupta called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

Srinagar decked up for 8th Muharram procession today

■ Security grid, traffic plan in place ■ Traditional Guru Bazar-Dalgate procession to pass through city centre

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 23: Srinagar City has been decked up for the 8th Muharram procession scheduled for Wednesday, with black flags, banners and religious insignia adorning several parts as authorities completed extensive preparations for the major religious event.

The administration has intensified security measures, finalised civic arrangements and shared a comprehensive traffic management plan to ensure the smooth and peaceful conduct of the traditional procession.

The 8th Muharram procession will be taken out along the traditional route from Guru Bazar to Dalgate via Budshah Kadal and M.A. Road, passing through the heart of the city amid



elaborate arrangements put in place by the civil and police administration.

Officials said a coordinated mechanism involving civil and police authorities has been established to

facilitate the smooth conduct of processions while ensuring public safety and maintaining law and order. Senior officers from various departments, including police, health, municipal

services, fire and emergency services, power development, water supply and other essential services, have been assigned specific responsibilities.

The administration has undertaken extensive measures, including route management, deployment of adequate security personnel, traffic regulation, sanitation drives, uninterrupted electricity and drinking water supply, emergency medical facilities, installation of control rooms and round-the-clock monitoring of arrangements.

The officers have been directed to maintain close liaison with Muharram committees, religious organisations, community representatives and

Continued on

www.kashmirthunder.in

BJP pays tribute to Syama Prasad Mookherjee

Sajid Raina

New Delhi, Jun 23: BJP leaders on Tuesday paid tributes to Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his death anniversary and said the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir had fulfilled the vision for which he had sacrificed his life.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid homage to Mookerjee and described him as a distinguished patriot, scholar and statesman who dedicated his life to the country’s development.

In a post on X, Modi said Mookerjee’s unwavering conviction, courage in public life and commitment to national interest continue to inspire generations.

The prime minister said Mookerjee’s sacrifice remains etched in the collective memory of the nation and reaffirmed the government’s commitment to building a strong and developed India guided by the values he cherished.

Mookerjee, a staunch opponent of Article 370, died under detention in Srinagar on June 23, 1953, after being arrested during his campaign against the permit system for entry into Jammu and Kashmir.

Union Home Minister Amit



Shah said June 23 was an inspiring day for BJP workers as it marked the sacrifice made by Mookerjee for the cause of national unity and the principle of “one nation, one constitution”.

Addressing a function in New Delhi, Shah said Mookerjee had opposed the separate constitutional arrangement in Jammu and Kashmir and raised the slogan against having two constitutions, two flags and two prime ministers in one country.

Recalling Mookerjee’s campaign, Shah said he had marched from Delhi to Kashmir and refused to seek a permit to enter the region, asserting that Kashmir was an integral part of India.

The home minister said Mookerjee was arrested after re-fusing to comply with the permit system and later died under suspicious circumstances while in detention in Jammu and Kashmir.

Shah said the abrogation of Article 370 by the Narendra Modi government in August 2019 had realised Mookerjee’s dream and completed the mission for which he had struggled.

BJP president Nitin Nabin also paid floral tributes to Mookerjee at the party headquarters in New Delhi and said the removal of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir was a major step towards fulfilling his vision.

Nabin said Mookerjee’s sacrifice for the complete integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of the country would always be remembered and that the BJP was carry-ing forward the nationalist ideology he championed.

He said the work being undertaken by the BJP under Prime Minister Modi’s leadership to realise Mookerjee’s objectives was the true tribute to the Jana Sangh founder.

Several senior BJP leaders attended the tribute programme held on the occasion of Mookerjee’s 73rd death anniversary—(KNO)

Statehood promise will be fulfilled: Tarun Chugh



Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 23: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) National General Secretary and Member Parliament (MP), Tarun Chugh on Tuesday said the Centre remains committed to restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, asserting that the promise made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be fulfilled.

Addressing a press conference here on the 73rd death anniversary of Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the BJP leader said the Prime Minister has already indicated that statehood would be granted to Jammu and Kashmir, and the commitment remains intact.

“The promise has been made, and it will be fulfilled,” Chugh said.

Paying tributes to Mookerjee, he said the Jana Sangh founder sacrificed his life for the complete integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of the country. He

alleged that several questions surrounding Mookerjee’s arrest and death in custody in 1953 remain unanswered and demanded that all records related to the case be made public.

“The country deserves to know the truth,” the BJP leader said. He asked why details related to the case had remained hidden for decades.

He also called for the declassification of archival records related to the 1947 tribal invasion of Jammu and Kashmir, alleging that successive governments failed to adequately document the killings, destruction and atrocities committed during the invasion.

Chugh said thousands of people belonging to different communities, including Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Pandits and Christians, suffered during the violence and said the full extent of the tragedy was never brought before the public.

Urging authorities to open government archives, he said people should have access to historical records so future generations can understand the sacrifices made during the conflict. Drawing a comparison with efforts across the world to preserve memories of historical tragedies, he said events related to the 1947 invasion should also be documented and highlighted.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public that the vehicle number plate bearing Registration No. JK01AD-8098 of my vehicle has been lost/misplaced in Lal Bazar, Srinagar. I am applying for the issuance of a duplicate number plate from the concerned Transport Authority. If any person has any objection in this regard, he/she may contact the Regional Transport Office (RTO), Kashmir, Srinagar within a period of seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice. Thereafter, no objection shall be entertained.

Intiyaz Hussain Mugloo
S/o Gh. Mohd. Mugloo
R/o Boni Bagh, Lal Bazar, Srinagar

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Waheeda Akhter w/o: Muneer Ahmad Ganaie R/o: Hampora Kralgund.

Versus
C.E.O Municipal Council Sopore/BDO Sangrama/BDO Sopore

(Registrar of Birth and Death) ...Non Applicant
NOTICE TO PUBLIC AT LARGE

Whereas, the above titled case is under process in this court, seeking direction therein to the non-applicant u/s 13(3) of the Registration of Births & Deaths Act, 1969 for registration of Birth event of the applicant’s Son namely Haziq ul Islam s/o: Muneer Ahmad Ganaie as 23-02-2016 at Sopore Nursing Home.

Whereas through the medium of this proclamation the public at large is informed that in case any one has any objection for issuance of direction with respect to the registration of aforementioned Birth event he /she shall file the same before this court in person or through counsel within 7 days from the date of the publication of this proclamation. If the date fixed is declared holiday, the matter will be taken on the next working day.

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Waheeda Akhter w/o: Muneer Ahmad Ganaie R/o: Hampora Kralgund.

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(Registrar of Birth and Death) ...Non Applicant
NOTICE TO PUBLIC AT LARGE

Whereas, the above titled case is under process in this court, seeking direction therein to the non-applicant u/s 13(3) of the Registration of Births & Deaths Act, 1969 for registration of Birth event of the applicant’s Son namely Hamud ul Islam D/o: Muneer Ahmad Ganaie as 07-12-2019 at Sopore Nursing Home.

Whereas through the medium of this proclamation the public at large is informed that in case any one has any objection for issuance of direction with respect to the registration of aforementioned Birth event he /she shall file the same before this court in person or through counsel within 7 days from the date of the publication of this proclamation. If the date fixed is declared holiday, the matter will be taken on the next working day.

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

Gut is the body’s second brain: Experts

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jun 23: The human gut is increasingly being recognised as far more than a digestive organ, with medical experts now describing it as the body’s “second brain” due to its remarkable influence on physical health, mental well-being, immunity, metabolism, and overall quality of life. A growing body of scientific evidence shows that a healthy gut is central to maintaining a healthy mind, healthy body, and ultimately, a happy life.

According to health experts, the gut contains an intricate network of approximately 500 million neurons known as the Enteric

Nervous System (ENS), which constantly communicates with the brain through nerves, hormones, immune pathways, and trillions of microorganisms residing in the digestive tract. This continuous two-way communication system, referred to as the Gut-Brain Axis, explains why digestive health and mental health are so closely interconnected.

The gut is responsible for producing several important hormones and neurotransmitters that regulate mood, sleep, appetite, digestion, and metabolism. Nearly 90 to 95 per cent of the body’s serotonin—often called the “happy hormone”—is produced in the gut. The gut also helps produce



dopamine, GABA, acetylcholine, and norepinephrine, all of which influence mood, motivation, memory, concentration, alertness, and stress management. Consequently,

poor gut health can contribute to anxiety, depression, mood swings, brain fog, fatigue, and reduced cognitive performance.

The gut also serves as the body’s largest immune organ, with approximately 70 to 80 per cent of immune cells located in the gastrointestinal tract. Healthy gut bacteria help train and regulate the immune system, enhancing the body’s ability to fight infections while reducing chronic inflammation, which is linked to numerous diseases.

Medical professionals advise people to watch for signs of poor gut health, which may include bloating, constipation, diarrhoea, acidity, excessive gas, food

intolerances, fatigue, brain fog, poor sleep, mood swings, anxiety, skin problems, frequent infections, sugar cravings, low immunity, joint pain, and unexplained weight gain.

To maintain optimal gut health, health experts recommend consuming a diet rich in fibre through fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds. Fermented foods such as yoghurt, curd, kefir, and traditional fermented vegetables can support a healthy microbiome by introducing beneficial microorganisms. Prebiotic foods, including garlic, onions, bananas, apples, oats,

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

EDITORIAL

A Sacred Thread That Must Never Break

The Kheer Bhawani Mela at Tulmulla was a powerful reminder of what Kashmir once was and what it must strive to become again. Thousands of Kashmiri Pandits, scattered across the country and abroad, returned to their ancestral shrine. They came to pray. They came to remember. They came to reconnect with a land that continues to live in their hearts despite decades of displacement. The warmth with which

local Muslims welcomed their Pandit brothers and sisters was heartwarming. They greeted them with flowers, assisted them with rituals, and embraced them as if no time had passed. These were not empty gestures but the echoes of a shared past, of centuries of coexistence, of a Kashmiriyat that refuses to die. Two sisters, one from the United States and the other from Mumbai, broke down at the shrine. They had heard stories of this

place from their mother. When they finally stood at the sacred spring, words failed them. Their children, who had grown up listening to tales of Kashmir, were witnessing their heritage come alive. This is what the Kheer Bhawani Mela represents – an inheritance of memories, a longing for home, and a hope that the next generation will not have to hear about Kashmir in stories alone. The voices of displaced Pandits were clear. They want to return.

But they want dignity, security, and respect. As one devotee rightly said, "We are incomplete without each other." This is the truth that must guide all efforts for reconciliation. Kashmir cannot be complete without its Pandit community. And the Pandit community cannot fully heal without returning to their homeland. Political leaders from across the spectrum visited the shrine. They spoke of harmony and return. But words must now translate

into action. The government must create conditions for a dignified rehabilitation. Local communities must extend the same warmth they showed at the mela into everyday life. The Kheer Bhawani Mela is a sacred thread that connects a community to its roots. That thread must never break. It must grow stronger. For the sake of Kashmir. For the sake of its children. For the sake of all communities that call this land home.

India's Emerging Technology Ecosystem: Technologies That Will Shape India's Future

India is no longer only adopting global technologies but increasingly shaping global conversations on inclusive, trusted, and human-centric technological development

India has transformed from a large digital market into an emerging global technology power over the last decade. Sustained government investments have strengthened national capability, expanded technological capacity, and enhanced global credibility. Mission-mode initiatives in Artificial Intelligence (AI), semiconductors, quantum technologies, supercomputing, cloud computing, and cybersecurity are shaping a strong innovation ecosystem.

Before the Leap
Twelve years ago, India began a determined journey to make technology a key driver of Viksit Bharat. The Government strengthened national technological capability through dedicated mission-mode programmes in emerging technologies such as semiconductors, AI, quantum technologies, supercomputing, blockchain, and cloud infrastructure. Long-term policy support and strategic investments enabled the development of indigenous technologies, secure digital systems, and globally competitive innovation ecosystems.

Digital India Programme as the Backbone
Digital India Programme, launched in 2015, laid the foundation for India's emerging technology ecosystem. Optical fibre coverage increased from 19.35 lakh route kilometres in 2019 to 42.36 lakh route kilometres in 2025. India achieved one of the world's fastest 5G rollouts, with services reaching 99.9% of districts. Internet connections increased from 25.15 crore in 2014 to 102.86 crore in 2026. Broadband connections rose from 6.1 crore in 2014 to 99.56 crore in December 2025. Average monthly data consumption increased from 61.66 MB in 2014 to 24.01 GB, while data costs declined sharply from 269 per GB to 8-10 per GB.

Supercomputers for High-Performance Computing

Under the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM), launched in 2015 with an outlay of 4,500 crore, India has deployed 38 supercomputers with a combined computing power of 47 petaflops across leading institutions. A major achievement is the development of the indigenous PARAM Rudra series.

India's Semiconductor Ecosystem

The Government launched the Semicon India Programme in December 2021 with an outlay of 76,000 crore. The Union Budget 2026-27 further announced India

Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0 with an initial outlay of 1,000 crore for FY 2026-27. The Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme launched in 2021 supports startups, MSMEs, and academic institutions. As of March 2026, 24 companies received fiscal support and 105 applicants received EDA tools support. Seven chips have been fabricated from 16 tape-outs, including advanced 12 nm designs. As of June 2026, 12 projects worth around 1.64 lakh crore have been approved under the ISM, including one semiconductor fab, two compound semiconductor fabs, and nine packaging units.

Creating Quantum Future
The Government approved the National Quantum Mission in April 2023 with an outlay of 6,003.65 crore. Four dedicated Thematic Hubs have been established at leading institutions, engaging more than 152 researchers across 43 organisations. The mission has supported 17 startups, including nine deep-tech ventures. India demonstrated a 1,000-km secure quantum communication network, achieving the milestone six years ahead of schedule. The foundation stone for India's first Quantum Valley was laid in Amaravati in February 2026.

India's AI Transformation
The Government approved the IndiaAI

Mission in 2024 with an outlay of over 10,300 crore. India, as on March 2026, has around 1.8 lakh startups, with nearly 89% of new startups using AI solutions. A common computing facility with over 38,000 GPUs is being established. The AI Kosh platform hosts 12,115 datasets and 306 AI models across 20 sectors.

Cloud Computing
India's indigenous cloud ecosystem began with the launch of MeghRaj in 2014. MeghRaj 2.0 strengthened this ecosystem through hybrid cloud architecture and stronger cybersecurity. As on June 2026, adoption increased from 342 government departments in 2015-16 to 2,323 departments. The Union Budget 2026-27 accelerated cloud and AI infrastructure development through major policy incentives, including tax holidays till 2047.

Blockchain
The National Blockchain Framework (NBF) was initiated in 2021 with an outlay of 64.76 crore. As of October 2025, over 3 crore property documents have been verified through blockchain platforms. The RBI launched Digital Rupee (e₹) pilots, while TRAI adopted blockchain-based DLT to curb spam.

Data Centers
India's data centre sector has witnessed rapid expansion, with capacity growing

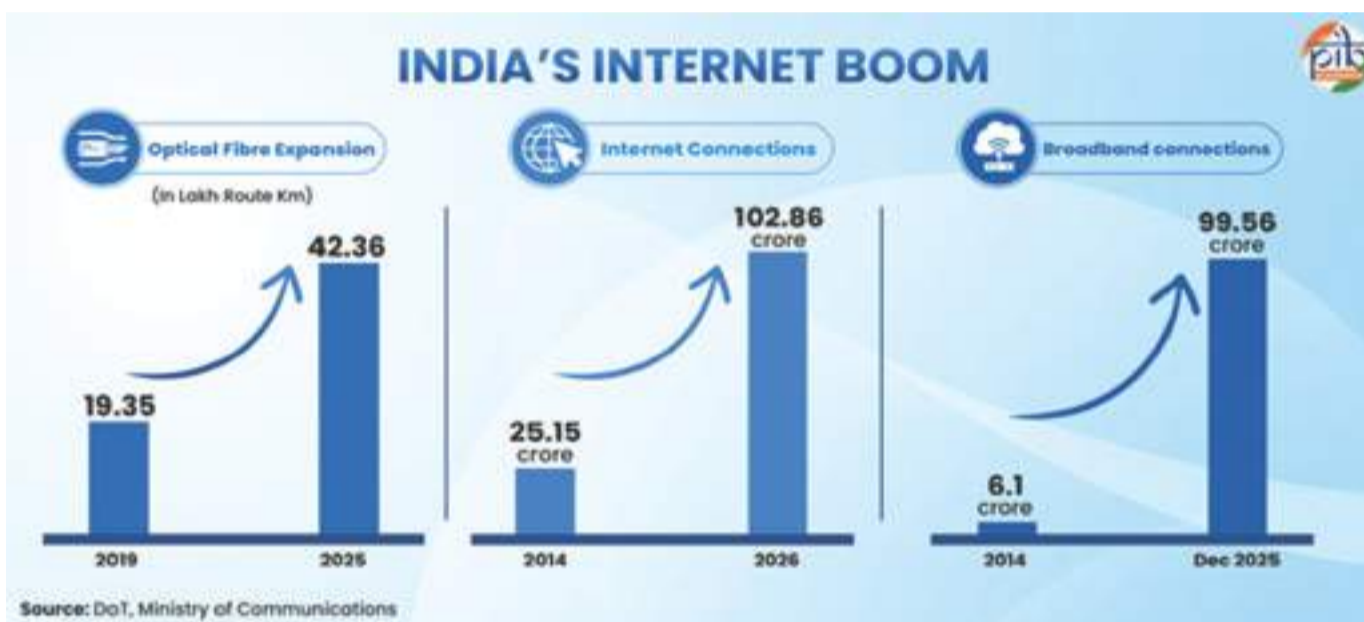
from about 375 MW in 2020 to nearly 1,500 MW by 2025. Major hubs have emerged in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Noida, and Jamnagar.

Biotechnology
India's biotechnology sector crossed USD 150 billion in 2023 and reached USD 190 billion as of June 2026. DBT-BIRAC has established 94 bioincubators across 25 States and UTs.

Building Capacity, Education, Research and Skill
The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) was operationalised in 2024. Grants worth 264.70 crore had been awarded in high-impact technology areas as of March 2026. The Government approved the Research Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme in July 2025 with a corpus of 1 lakh crore.

The FutureSkills PRIME programme was launched in 2018. As of March 2026, more than 27.53 lakh candidates have registered on the platform, with around 80% of learners coming from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. NIELIT operates through 56 centres, 750 affiliated institutes, and more than 9,000 facilitation centres.

The Government established four Centres of Excellence (CoEs) in Artificial Intelligence with a total allocation of 1,490 crore, focusing on Education, Healthcare, Sustainable



Cities, and Agriculture. The Skilling for AI Readiness (SOAR) programme was launched in July 2025 targeting school students from class 6 to class 12.

The Chips to Start-up (C2S) Programme was launched in 2022 with an outlay of 250 crore over five years. Around one lakh individuals have accessed the shared national EDA infrastructure across 400 organisations. More than 75 patents have been filed by participating institutions.

India's Growing Global Technology Credibility

India rose to 38th in the Global Innovation Index 2025 from 81st in 2015. India now hosts over 2,100 GCCs employing around 2.36 million professionals. The Bharat 6G Alliance (B6GA) was formed in 2023. The New, Emerging and Strategic Technologies (NEST) Division was set up in 2020.

SEMICON India 2025 brought together over 350 exhibiting companies from 48 countries, with 13 MoUs signed. India AI Impact Summit 2026 attracted delegations from over 100 countries, with 92 countries adopting the India AI Impact Summit Declaration and catalysing over USD 200 billion in AI-related investment commitments. India formally joined the Pax Silica coalition.

Global leadership in Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

India has signed agreements with 23 countries for cooperation on DPI. UPI is operational in countries like Singapore, UAE, France, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

India's Moment, India's Making
Twelve years ago, India was a large digital market. Today, it is emerging as a global digital power. The journey is built on three interconnected pillars: expanding national capacity, strengthening technological capability, and building global credibility. The achievements of the past twelve years represent the technological foundation of Viksit Bharat 2047. India is no longer only adopting global technologies but increasingly shaping global conversations on inclusive, trusted, and human-centric technological development.

Disclaimer: This is an abridged version of the original PIB article "India's Emerging Technology Ecosystem" (June 22, 2026). Key facts and data have been retained. For the complete article, please refer to the official PIB website.

When The World Feels Too Much: Reclaiming Stability

In uncertain times, stability may come from connection rather than control

Afarin Rajaei

Many people are searching for something that feels increasingly difficult to find: solid ground.

This is not because life has suddenly become dangerous every moment of every day, but because uncertainty has become a constant companion. News cycles move rapidly. Technology evolves faster than many can keep up with. Political, social, and economic changes seem to arrive in waves.

For many people, it feels as though the ground beneath them is constantly shifting. When this happens, a natural question emerges: Where do we find stability when the world feels unstable?

The Myth of Control
When uncertainty increases, many people instinctively seek greater control. They consume more information. They make more plans. They try to anticipate every possible outcome. They search for certainty before making decisions.

These responses are understandable. Control often feels like safety. The challenge is that many of life's most



important experiences cannot be controlled. Relationships involve uncertainty. Health involves uncertainty. Parenting involves uncertainty. Careers involve uncertainty. Even our best plans are vulnerable to unexpected change.

The more we rely on certainty as the foundation of stability, the more fragile stability becomes.

Stability Is Not the Same as Predictability

Many people assume that stability comes from knowing what will happen next. But psychological stability often comes from something different. It comes from believing we can respond to what happens next.

This distinction matters. Predictability depends on external circumstances. Resilience depends on internal and relational resources.

One can live in a highly predictable environment and still feel emotionally fragile.

Conversely, one can face significant uncertainty while remaining grounded and connected.

The difference is often not the situation itself but the resources available for navigating it.

Relationships as Anchors
When people experience collective uncertainty, they often focus on changing external conditions. Yet research consistently suggests that one of the strongest predictors of psychological well-being is the quality of our relationships.

Human beings regulate one another. We calm each other's nervous systems. We provide perspective. We remind one another that we are not facing challenges alone.

In uncertain times, relationships often become emotional anchors – not because they eliminate uncertainty, but because they help us carry it.

Small Certainties Matter
When the larger world feels overwhelming, people sometimes overlook the importance of small, everyday forms of stability: a morning routine, a conversation with a trusted friend, walking the dog, preparing a familiar meal, time spent in nature, family traditions, or meaningful rituals.

These moments may seem insignificant compared to the magnitude of global events. Yet they often provide the consistency our nervous systems need.

Small certainties help create a sense of continuity when larger systems feel unpredictable.

A Different Kind of Security
Perhaps stability was never meant to come from guarantees. Perhaps it emerges from knowing who we are, what we value, and who we can lean on when life becomes difficult.

The world may continue to change. Uncertainty may remain. But psychological security does not require perfect conditions. It requires enough connection, meaning, flexibility, and support to keep moving forward.

When the world feels too much, stability may not be something we find. It may be something we create together.

Afarin Rajaei, Ph.D., LMFT, is a therapist, professor, supervisor, researcher, and author who explores how relationships, culture, and global change shape our emotional lives. Courtesy: Psychology Today

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

Sakeena Itoo reviews admissions in Govt Degree Colleges across J&K

Calls for emerging technology courses, diversified academic offerings, measures to boost enrolment

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 23: Maintaining that student welfare should remain the top priority, Minister for Higher Education, Sakeena Itoo, on Tuesday said that sustained reforms in the higher education sector are essential to make colleges more accessible, inclusive and responsive to the aspirations of students.

The Minister, as per an official statement, made these remarks while addressing a comprehensive review meeting held to assess the ongoing admission process in the Government Degree Colleges across Jammu and Kashmir.

During the meeting, Sakeena Itoo had a comprehensive review of the admission status across Government Degree Colleges. She directed the Higher Education Department and college authorities to strengthen awareness and outreach initiatives in the institutions with comparatively low enrolment to ensure wider access to higher education.

The Minister emphasised that Principals and faculty members should actively engage with the students and parents to enhance awareness about the academic programmes, scholarship opportunities and career pathways available in Government Degree Colleges.



Reviewing the admission figures, Sakeena Itoo was informed that colleges have recorded a significant rise in student admissions this year after the government introduced several measures to simplify and ease the admission process.

Sakeena Itoo, who has been closely monitoring the admission process, reiterated her commitment towards strengthening the higher education sector in Jammu and Kashmir. She said that it is the prime concern of the present dispensation to ensure that every eligible student gets access to quality higher education.

"The new reforms have helped reverse the declining trend in college admissions witnessed over the past few years and we hope that the admission figures would exceed 50,000 after the completion of next two rounds of admissions," asserted

the Minister.

She said that legacy colleges continue to witness higher demand, which is encouraging but stressed the need to further strengthen the higher education system by expanding the choice of courses and enhancing student welfare measures to make colleges more attractive for the aspiring students. She added that walk-in admissions have been facilitated through an in-house online portal to ensure that no eligible student is denied access to higher education. She informed that the Principals have been given flexibility in the admission process to take student-centric decisions in the best interest of students.

She stressed the need to rationalise course offerings, upgrade infrastructure and create academic opportunities that respond to the changing needs and aspirations of the students.

She directed the officers to closely monitor the admission trends and take all necessary measures to improve enrolment, particularly in colleges where the admissions remain below expectations.

The Minister also sought inputs from the Principals on the persistent decline in admissions in certain subjects and asked them to suggest measures to arrest the downward trend. She stressed that the neighbouring colleges should offer diversified courses rather than identical programmes, so as to optimise academic resources and provide students with a wider range of educational opportunities.

Stressing the importance of ensuring uninterrupted academic activities, the Minister directed all the colleges to make arrangements for commencement of classes at the earliest so that the students do

not suffer any academic loss.

Sakeena Itoo emphasised the need for rationalisation of faculty across colleges and directed the Higher Education Department to ensure optimum utilisation of teaching staff by deploying faculty in a manner that strengthens academic standards and addresses gaps in colleges facing low admissions.

The Minister emphasised the need to introduce new courses in emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence and other future-oriented disciplines, to align higher education with evolving academic and industry requirements. She also called for structural reforms across colleges to ensure a more balanced and uniform distribution of admissions.

"We have to introduce new courses in emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Skill Linked Hybrid Tracks and Econometrics. Our goal is to ensure that every eligible student receives an opportunity to pursue higher education of his choice," the Minister said.

She further asserted that the government is focusing on enhancing the employability of students by promoting industry-oriented initiatives and skill development programmes so that graduates are better equipped to secure meaningful employment after completing their education.

Advocate General's office condoles demise of Chief Justice (A) Sanjeev Kumar Shukla's mother

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 23: A condolence meeting of Law Officers and staff of the Advocate General Organization was held on Tuesday at the Advocate General's office, Srinagar, to mourn the demise of Shakti Devi, mother of Chief Justice (Acting) Sanjeev Kumar Shukla, who passed away on June 25.

The meeting was presided over by Senior Additional Advocate General Mohsin-ul-Showkat Qadri. Shakti Devi passed away on June 20, 2026. Expressing profound grief

over the loss, Senior AAG Mohsin-ul-Showkat Qadri conveyed deep sympathies to the bereaved family. He said Shakti Devi's passing was an irreparable loss and prayed for strength to the family in this hour of grief.

The meeting was attended by Senior Additional Advocate Generals, Government Counsels, officers and employees of the organization.

All the participants prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul and forbearance to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss.

J&K Judicial Academy condoles demise

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 23: A condolence meeting was held at the J&K Judicial Academy, Srinagar, to mourn the demise of the mother of Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Acting Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

Director J&K Judicial Academy Naseer Ahmad Dar, Resource Person Faizan-ul-Haq, trainee Civil Judges (Junior Division) and officers and staff of the Academy attended the meeting

and expressed heartfelt sympathies and condolences with the bereaved family.

As a mark of respect, a two-minute silence was observed and prayers were offered for eternal peace to the departed soul and strength to the family to bear the irreparable loss.

On behalf of the Judicial Academy fraternity, Director Naseer Ahmad Dar conveyed sincere condolences to Justice Sanjeev Kumar and his family, praying to the Almighty to grant solace in this hour of grief.

NADCP: AHD Kashmir launches 8th round of free FMD vaccination

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 23: Director, Animal Husbandry Department (AHD), Kashmir, Dr. Rakesh Kaul kickstarted 8th round of vaccination from the Directorate of Animal Husbandry, Kashmir.

The drive was kickstarted in the presence of departmental officers, officials, Doctors and paravets, with an aim to eradicate the Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD) by 2030. Under the National Animal

Disease Control Programme (NADCP), free vaccination of all eligible livestock is carried out against the FMD at the door steps of livestock owners.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director emphasized the importance of timely vaccination and requested livestock owners to cooperate fully with the field staff of the department and ensure that all eligible livestock population is covered during the vaccination campaign.

HADP: DC Kulgam flags off Farmers for Exposure visits



KT News Desk

KULGAM, JUNE 23: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, Tuesday flagged off a batch of 30 farmers for an exposure visit under the Promotion of Floriculture component of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) 2026-27 from Mini Secretariat Kulgam.

The three-day capacity-building programme, as per an official statement, aims to provide participants with practical exposure to modern floriculture practices and successful enterprise models. During the visit, the farmers will tour the Floriculture Development Office, Lalmandi Srinagar, and SKUAST-K. They will also visit private floriculture nurseries in Kulgam and Anantnag,

the Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Farm at Verinag, and the Lavender Farm at Sirhama.

In a parallel initiative under the Promotion of Apiculture component of HADP, another batch of 30 farmers will visit the Division of Entomology, Pollination Centre, SKUAST-K, to gain technical know-how on advanced beekeeping practices, including queen rearing, bee breeding, and nucleus stock management.

The exposure visits are aimed at enhancing the skills and knowledge of farmers and unemployed youth, encouraging them to adopt innovative agricultural practices and avail benefits under various government schemes, including HADP, JKICP, CSS, and UT Capex, thereby creating sustainable livelihood and employment opportunities in the district.

J&K CEO hosts first ever Global Conference on Polling Day Best Practices



KT News Desk

JAMMU, JUNE 23: The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Jammu and Kashmir, held its first International Conference on Global Best Practices in Polling Day Operations in hybrid mode, with 60 participants at Nirvachan Bhawan, Jammu and 115 joining online from across the world.

Conducted under India's Chairmanship of International IDEA, the event, as per an official statement, forms part of thematic research led by IIDEM and the Election Commission of India. The J&K CEO Office is preparing a comparative study of polling-day operations across 92 countries in Europe, Africa, the Americas, Asia and Oceania.

Opening the conference, Chief Electoral Officer Sanjeev Verma said the polling day demands that secrecy, equality, accessibility and integrity be delivered simultaneously under time pressure across thousands of locations.

Joint CEO Anil Salgotra presented the study's framework, built around seven pillars of the polling-day cycle: legal framework, polling place, voting procedure, equipment and technology, inclusiveness and accessibility, security and transparency and post-poll processes of counting, custody and audit. Data was captured using a 60-point questionnaire across the 92 countries, drawing from legislation, regulations and international observation reports, creating a dataset of over 5,000 points.

Technical sessions followed on each pillar, with Salgotra presenting the key findings before the expert audiences.

Speakers included Antonio Spinelli, Principal Adviser, International IDEA-IIDEM Cooperation; Rakesh Minhas, DEO Jammu; Khatia Lachashvili, Chairperson of Gldani District Election Commission, Central Election Commission of Georgia and Professor (Brig) Neeraj Soni, IIM Jammu.

Nasha Mukht Abhiyan DC Ganderbal calls for sustained multi-departmental efforts, chairs NCORD meeting

KT News Desk

GANDERBAL, JUNE 23: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore Tuesday chaired a meeting of the District Level NCORD Committee to review the district's efforts towards curbing drug abuse and strengthening rehabilitation, awareness and enforcement measures under the ongoing Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan.

During the meeting, as per an official statement, a comprehensive review of the actions taken by various departments in tackling substance abuse was held, with focus on enforcement, awareness generation, rehabilitation services, and the prevention of illicit cultivation of narcotic crops.

During the meeting, the Drug Control Department informed that regular inspections of medical shops were being carried out across the district. It was reported that action against several medical shops in terms of suspension, cancellation of license, and sealing of premises has been done. They also apprised about lifting of samples to check misuse of pharmaceutical drugs.

Reviewing enforcement measures, the committee was informed that naka checking and random inspections of warehouses and courier facilities were being conducted to prevent the transportation and illegal distribution of narcotic substances. The Excise



and Police Departments were directed to continue surprise inspections and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to curb drug trafficking.

Health department informed about the training of Addiction Treatment Facility (ATF) staff and availability of required medicine.

DC emphasised the need for a compassionate and victim-centric approach to ensure effective treatment and recovery support for those battling addiction.

The meeting was informed that awareness and sensitisation programmes had been conducted in various schools, while Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities were being undertaken across the district. The DC directed all concerned departments to further expand outreach programmes and involve educational institutions, community leaders and youth groups in spreading awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse.

The committee also reviewed progress on the cancellation of driving licences, vehicle registrations and other

documents of individuals involved in narcotics-related offences. Concerned departments were directed to strengthen coordination, and ensure timely disposal of pending cases as per prescribed procedures.

Calling for sustained coordination among all stakeholders, the DC reiterated that combating drug abuse requires collective efforts from government agencies, educational institutions, families and communities. He directed all departments to work in close coordination to build a safer, healthier and drug-free Ganderbal.

The meeting was attended by Senior Superintendent of Police, Ganderbal, Additional Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Deputy Director Prosecution, Medical Superintendent District Hospital Ganderbal, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Education Officer, Assistant Regional Transport Officer, Tehsildars, Deputy Superintendent of Police (Headquarters), and officers from Health, Excise, Police, Drug Control, Social Welfare and other concerned departments.

CIPMC Srinagar organises NPSS training, Khet Bachao Abhiyan in Sumbal

KT News Desk

BANDIPORA, JUNE 23: Central Integrated Pest Management Centre (CIPMC), Srinagar, Tuesday organized a National Pest Surveillance System (NPSS) Training Programme and Khet Bachao Abhiyan at the District Agriculture Office, Sumbal, Bandipora, in collaboration with the Agriculture Department and local farmers.

The programme witnessed the participation of around 40 farmers and Agriculture Department officials. The event was chaired by District Agriculture Officer (Extension), Bandipora, Ghulam Hassan Mir, along with Sub-Divisional Agriculture Officer (SDAO),

Sumbal, Amit Sharma. During the programme, Dr. Haroon Rashid Hakla, Assistant Plant Protection Officer, CIPMC Srinagar, demonstrated various Integrated Pest Management (IPM) tools and techniques. He also highlighted the importance of the safe, judicious, and quality use of pesticides for sustainable crop protection.

Abir Shankhari, Assistant Plant Protection Officer, delivered a detailed lecture and practical training on the functionality and application of the NPSS to Agriculture Department officials, emphasizing its role in timely pest monitoring and effective crop management.

Speaking on the occasion, the District Agriculture Officer

(Extension) stressed the importance of adopting natural farming practices, exercising necessary precautions while spraying pesticides, and preventing the sale and purchase of spurious pesticides. He urged farmers and field functionaries to promote safe and sustainable agricultural practices for improved productivity and environmental protection.

The participants appreciated the programme, describing it as informative and highly beneficial. The training enhanced the knowledge and skills of both farmers and Agriculture Department officials regarding integrated pest management, pest surveillance, and responsible pesticide use.

DIPR's Cultural Unit intensifies anti-drug awareness campaign at Women's College M.A. Road

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 23: Reinforcing its commitment to the ongoing Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan, the Cultural Unit of the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) organised a comprehensive drug awareness programme at Women's College, M.A. Road, Srinagar, in collaboration with the college administration.

The programme, as per an official statement, aimed at sensitising students about the grave consequences of substance abuse and inspiring them to play a proactive role in building a drug-free and healthier society. The event, as per an official statement, witnessed enthusiastic



participation from students, faculty members and officials of the Cultural Unit, DIPR.

As part of the awareness initiative, students delivered insightful speeches highlighting the growing threat posed by drug addiction and underscoring the responsibility of

youth in combating the menace. The speakers stressed the importance of awareness, vigilance and collective action in protecting society from the harmful effects of substance abuse.

Adding a creative dimension to the campaign, artists of Tulkul Arts and Media Collective presented a powerful and thought-provoking skit portraying the devastating impact of drug addiction on individuals, families and communities. Through an engaging performance, the artists effectively conveyed the message of the Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan, earning appreciation from the audience for their impactful presentation.

Addressing the gathering, AECO, Cultural Unit, DIPR, Syed

Shakeel Shan, emphasised that the fight against drug abuse requires a united and sustained effort from all sections of society. He highlighted the crucial role of awareness, community participation and active youth engagement in ensuring the success of the anti-drug campaign.

In recognition of their active participation and valuable contributions to the programme, certificates and mementoes were presented to the student speakers.

The college administration lauded the initiative undertaken by the Cultural Unit and appreciated its continued efforts in spreading awareness among students about the dangers of drug abuse while fostering a culture of responsibility and healthy living.

People-centric governance our priority: Minister Sharma Meets legislators, deputations; directs priority redressal of public grievances

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 23: Several deputations, public representatives and legislators on Tuesday called on Satish Sharma and apprised him of various public issues, developmental requirements and sector-specific concerns from their respective constituencies.

Among those who met the Minister was a deputation from Kulingam, Kupwara, which projected several issues concerning the Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department, augmentation of sports infrastructure, improvement of

transport facilities and execution of various developmental works in the area. The deputation sought early intervention to ensure better public service delivery and accelerated development.

A deputation of Rehbar-e-Khel also called on the Minister and raised issues related to their regularization, service conditions and other long-pending service matters. The members urged the government to take a sympathetic view of their genuine demands and ensure an early resolution.

Another deputation representing the J&K Wholesale Meat



Dealers Association highlighted issues concerning the inter-state transportation of meat, including logistical and regulatory

challenges affecting the smooth movement and supply of meat into Jammu and Kashmir. They requested for appropriate

measures to streamline the process and safeguard the interests of traders while ensuring uninterrupted supplies to consumers.

Legislators who called on the Minister included the MLAs from Kupwara, Langate, Beerwah, Lal Chowk, Chadoora, Khansahib, Rajpura and Sonawari. They projected a wide range of constituency-specific issues. They sought the Minister's intervention for early completion of key infrastructure projects, strengthening of essential public services, augmentation of transport facilities, improvement of sports

infrastructure and effective implementation of welfare and development schemes. They also stressed the need for coordinated efforts among various departments to address the aspirations of the people.

Giving a patient hearing to all the deputations and legislators, Satish Sharma assured them that every genuine issue would be examined on priority and appropriate directions would be issued to the concerned departments for prompt action. He reiterated that the government is committed to transparent, responsive and people-centric governance,

with special emphasis on timely grievance redressal and equitable development across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister directed the concerned officers to maintain close coordination with the public representatives and stakeholders, regularly monitor the progress of developmental works and ensure time-bound resolution of public grievances. He stressed that strengthening public service delivery, improving infrastructure and addressing the concerns of all sections of society remain among the government's foremost priorities.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Public service

Jharkhand, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand to study the grassroots service delivery models of Jammu Kashmir including BEAMS-EMPOWERMENT, Aapki Zameen-Aapki Nigrani and "Your Mobile-Our Office" which had transformed service delivery and program implementation in villages. He highlighted the Government of India report which had observed that between 2016 and 2018 Jammu Kashmir recorded 20 million digital transactions over three years. In contrast, in the first six months of 2023 alone there were 50 Crore digital transactions - far exceeding many large states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Odisha, Karnataka, and Kerala.

"More than 15,000 CSC (Common Service Centre) outlets are operational in Jammu Kashmir today. Of the 4,290 panchayats, 4,211 are connected to this network, representing an impressive 98.16 percent coverage. The remaining 79 panchayats are in very remote and border areas where connectivity remains a challenge.

We must also strengthen a culture of knowledge exchange. It is essential to share successful models, best practices, and innovations from each state and Union Territory so that service delivery at the last mile becomes more effective. I believe events like this will foster mutual learning and cooperation. A successful panchayat model in Haryana can inspire a panchayat in Karnataka. Similarly, an innovative initiative from Jammu Kashmir can open new possibilities in Jharkhand," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said that the regional conference on service delivery is a reflection of three core traits of India- unity in diversity, strength through cooperation, and prosperity through service.

"I am confident these qualities together will build local governance rooted in collaboration, participation, and a spirit of change. Our objective must be clear: to develop panchayats where every citizen can access services digitally, grievances are resolved quickly, decisions are taken collectively, and accountability is systemic. We must remember that the panchayat of the future will not be merely an administrative unit. They will be a dynamic centre of innovation, equal opportunity, sustainable development, and public trust," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor shared key recommendations with the participants to implement in their respective states. The focus remains on strengthening grassroots service delivery and driving innovation across the nation.

"My first recommendation is to establish a "Village Innovation Lab" in every panchayat. Local youth, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, and social organisations can collaborate there on low-cost solar solutions, new irrigation techniques, and other local innovations. My second recommendation is to run modern capacity-building programmes in every panchayat so leaders grow confident and capable of building self-reliant, progressive villages. My third recommendation is to institutionalise participatory budgeting in every panchayat - an initiative we had launched in Jammu Kashmir in 2021. When citizens decide how part of the panchayat fund is spent, governance becomes a powerful means of citizen participation.

My fourth recommendation is to mainstream sustainable development models like Green Jammu Kashmir, Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam, Ek Ped Beti Ke Naam, across panchayats nationwide. My fifth recommendation is to put women in leadership roles across all schemes. In Jammu Kashmir we prioritised women's leadership in campaigns against substance abuse and in ensuring access to clean drinking water, dairy, health, education, and social equity," the Lieutenant Governor said.

As part of the workshop, Panditpora Gram Panchayat from Kupwara and Syed Waris Hafiz, a dedicated CSC Village Level Entrepreneur from Budgam, J&K UT, along with outstanding Gram Panchayats and Common Service Centres (CSCs) from participating states were recognized and felicitated.

The workshop, held in collaboration with the Common Services Centre Special Purpose Vehicle (CSC-SPV), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, J&K, 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.

Representatives from civil society organisations, academic and research institutions, and organisations working in rural technology and digital public infrastructure also participated, contributing diverse perspectives on last-mile governance and service delivery.

Deliberations focused 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 experience-sharing sessions provided a structured platform for inter-State knowledge exchange and the dissemination of scalable governance models.

Javid Ahmad Dar, Minister for Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, J&K; Vivek Bharadwaj, Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj; Saurabh Bhagat, Commissioner Secretary, Information Technology, J&K; Ms. Palka Sahni, Joint Secretary, MoPR; Pravin Chandekar, Chief Operating Officer, Common Service Centres; Ms. Rehana Batul, Director General, J&K IMPARD; Mohammad Aijaz Asad, Secretary, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, J&K; Rajiv Omprakash, DIG CKR; Dr. GV Sundeep Chakravarthy, SSP Srinagar; Akshay Labroo, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar; Ms Anoo Malhotra, DG Rural Sanitation J&K; Panchayat functionaries, elected representatives, Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), and senior officials attended the inaugural session. (KNO)

LG orders uninterrupted

officials to raise awareness about traffic SOPs and cut-off timings, while increasing the number of RFID card counters to better facilitate devotees of Baba Barfani.

The meeting was attended by Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Nalin Prabhat, DGP; Shaleen Kabra, Additional Chief Secretary, Jal Shakti Department; Ashwani Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Power Development Department; Anil Kumar Singh, Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works (R&B) Department; Chandraker Bharti, Principal Secretary Home Department; S.J.M. Gillani, Special DG Coordination PHQ; Nitish Kumar, ADGP, CID; Dr. Mandeep K Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor and CEO Amarnathji Shrine Board, Administrative Secretaries, IGP, Divisional Commissioners, Municipal Commissioners and other senior officers. (KNO)

J&K Assembly

are technically suitable, meet the required quality standards, and have service centers available in both Jammu and Srinagar," the documents state.

The procurement of tablets is expected to cost around Rs 5 crore.

The NeVA is a flagship initiative of the Government of India under the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, aimed at making legislative assemblies and Parliament paperless. (KNO)

CM Omar pushes

rural habitations across Jammu and Kashmir. He was briefed on the ongoing projects, newly sanctioned works and the roadmap for completion of pending road and bridge projects.

Emphasising the transformative role of rural road connectivity in improving the quality of life in remote areas, the Chief Minister directed the concerned departments to ensure timely execution of all sanctioned works while maintaining the highest standards of quality.

He stressed the need for close inter-departmental coordination to resolve issues affecting project implementation, particularly those relating to statutory clearances and other procedural requirements. He called for regular monitoring of works at all levels to ensure adherence to timelines and avoid unnecessary delays.

The Chief Minister also reviewed the implementation strategy for PMGSY-IV and directed the concerned authorities to expedite preparatory processes so that sanctioned works are taken up in a time-bound manner. He underscored the importance of extending reliable road connectivity to eligible rural habitations, especially those located in remote and border areas.

During the meeting, the officers presented an overview of the progress achieved under different phases of PMGSY and outlined the action plan for completion of the remaining works. The Chief Minister directed that all pending issues requiring inter-departmental coordination be addressed on priority to facilitate seamless execution of the programme. (KNO)

Parl panel on

local people into confidence and how to encourage bonhomie with them.

Meanwhile, the committee led by its chairman Dr. Shashi Tharoor called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at Lok Bhavan here, as per the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

During the interaction, Tharoor discussed the Committee's engagements and meetings held during the visit. He informed that the members had visited border areas in Jammu and the Regional Passport Office yesterday, and today they held detailed interactions with senior Army officials in Srinagar. The members of

the Committee also shared their observations and experiences during the visit and discussed various issues.

The Lieutenant Governor, while interacting with the members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, spoke about the socio-economic transformation and developmental journey of Jammu & Kashmir over the past six years. He highlighted the significant improvement in the overall security environment and the renewed optimism among the people.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasized that Jammu & Kashmir has undergone a remarkable transformation after August 2019, where normal life flows uninterrupted across the Union Territory, aspirations are soaring, and the dreams of its people are being realized.

He also spoke about various infrastructure and development projects being implemented across the Union Territory, which are contributing to economic growth and improving the quality of life of the people of Jammu & Kashmir.

The committee members also called on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at Dachigam National Park.

The Committee briefed the Chief Minister about the objectives of its visit and its engagements across Jammu and Kashmir. The Committee, which had earlier visited Jammu, arrived in Srinagar today as part of its programme to gain first-hand insights into border management, security preparedness, and developmental issues in border areas.

Welcoming the members, Omar Abdullah appreciated the Committee's visit to the region and underscored the importance of sustained engagement by Parliamentary Committees in understanding the aspirations, challenges, and developmental needs of Jammu & Kashmir. He said such interactions provide an opportunity for informed policy discussions and contribute to strengthening governance and institutional coordination.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the significance of ensuring balanced development in border areas, with a focus on improving infrastructure, connectivity, public services, and livelihood opportunities for the people living in these regions. (KNO)

Cabinet gives

been reliably learnt that the government justified the RBA cut by noting that several areas entitled under it are already covered under other categories of reservation.

Sources further said that the government justified the cut in EWS on the grounds that their population in Jammu & Kashmir is smaller compared to other states.

On December 4, 2025, the UT Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had approved the reservation report prepared by a three-member Cabinet sub-committee led by Minister Sakina Itoo.

The Cabinet proposal was forwarded to the Lieutenant Governor for approval, who then sent it to the Ministry of Home Affairs for prior reference. The MHA returned the proposal, raising certain queries on it. (KNO)

Ensure peaceful

was attended by senior officers of the Army, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), intelligence agencies and the Jammu and Kashmir Police, including corps commanders, inspector generals and district police chiefs," an official said.

He said, the participants briefed the DGP on the security and logistical arrangements put in place for the smooth conduct of the pilgrimage.

During the meeting, DGP Prabhat directed all security agencies to enhance measures at vulnerable locations, particularly along the twin pilgrimage routes and other sensitive areas.

He asked officers to revisit and further strengthen security arrangements on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and railway infrastructure.

The DGP stressed strict adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs) and ordered daily briefings for deploying personnel to maintain operational readiness and situational awareness.

He also instructed officers to conduct awareness campaigns for pilgrims at camps and transit points by displaying banners and posters highlighting SOPs and important dos and don'ts.

"There is no room for complacency or errors in the security grid," DGP Prabhat told officers, while calling for the highest standards of vigilance, professionalism and preparedness.

Emphasising coordination among various agencies, he directed security and intelligence units to ensure timely sharing of information and work in close synergy on the ground.

INTENSIFY OPERATIONS AGAINST TERRORISTS

The DGP asked security forces to intensify

operations against terrorists and their associates and increase cordon-and-search operations, particularly around yatra routes, the national highway, railway stations and other critical installations.

He also directed officers to maintain strict surveillance over social media platforms and ensure prompt action against misinformation and rumours that could create panic among the public or pilgrims.

DGP REVIEWS SECURITY MEASURES FOR MUHARRAM

The DGP further reviewed security and administrative arrangements for the upcoming Muharram observances and instructed officers to maintain robust security measures while coordinating closely with local Shia organisations to ensure peaceful processions.

He also ordered the preparation of comprehensive traffic management plans and directed that procession routes be publicised in advance to minimise inconvenience to the public.

SECURITY FORCES CONDUCT MOCK DRILL ALONG JAMMU-SRINAGAR NATIONAL HIGHWAY

Earlier, security forces conducted a mock drill along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway in Ramban district to test emergency response mechanisms and coordination among agencies ahead of the yatra.

In Jammu, the National Security Guard (NSG) carried out a hostage-rescue simulation exercise at the Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas base camp as part of security preparedness measures. The joint drill involved multiple security agencies and was aimed at assessing response capabilities in the event of a terror-related contingency.

IGP JAMMU REVIEWS ARRANGEMENTS AT BHAGWATI NAGAR BASE CAMP

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police (IGP), Jammu, Bhim Sen Tuti, along with senior officers, reviewed security and preparedness arrangements at the Bhagwati Nagar base camp.

Officials said the review focused on surveillance, access control, traffic regulation, inter-agency coordination and other measures aimed at ensuring a safe and smooth pilgrimage.

SECURITY FORCES INTENSIFY PREVENTIVE OPERATIONS IN KULGAM

Meanwhile, security forces intensified preventive operations in South Kashmir's Kulgam district. Police said extensive searches were conducted in higher reaches, forest areas, orchards and nurseries across the district as part of heightened security measures for the pilgrimage.

Several suspected overground workers (OGWs) were rounded up for questioning during the operations, which, officials said, were aimed at maintaining a secure environment and preventing any attempt to disrupt peace during the annual yatra. (KNO)

Army Chief Upendra

regimental traditions and legacy.

The Indian Army announced the development in a statement, noting that General Dwivedi had earlier relinquished the appointment of Colonel of the Regiment after taking over as the Army Chief.

Army officials said the decision reflected his commitment to lead the force as a whole and maintain an institution-wide outlook while occupying the highest military office.

After assuming charge as Chief of the Army Staff, General Dwivedi had chosen not to hold the appointment of Colonel of any regiment, underscoring his role as the head of the entire Indian Army rather than being associated with a particular arm or formation.

With the latest appointment, the Army said, General Dwivedi continues his association with the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles and the Ladakh Scouts while serving as their Honorary Colonel.

Pertinently, the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles is among the Army's oldest infantry regiments and has a long record of operational service, while the Ladakh Scouts has earned recognition for its expertise in high-altitude warfare and operations in extreme terrain.

Military officials said the ceremony highlighted the importance of regimental traditions within the Army and reflected the bond between serving soldiers and their leadership.

The appointment comes days before General Dwivedi is scheduled to retire from service. The Centre has appointed Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth, currently serving as Vice Chief of the Army Staff, as the next Chief of the Army Staff. He will take over from General Dwivedi on June 30.

An alumnus of the National Defence Academy and an officer from the Armoured Corps, Lt Gen Seth has served in a range of command, staff and instructional appointments during a military career spanning nearly four decades.

Officials said the transition in leadership will take place on June 30 upon the retirement of General Dwivedi after a career marked by key

operational and strategic assignments within the Indian Army. (KNO)

India slams Pak

in force as part of its response to cross-border terrorism.

Without naming specific incidents, Jaiswal said Pakistan's attempts to raise issues relating to Jammu and Kashmir could not obscure the situation in territories under its control.

He pointed to continuing protests in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), describing them as the outcome of decades of economic neglect, denial of rights and administrative repression.

"The ongoing protests in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir are a direct consequence of Pakistan's long-standing policies of economic exploitation, suppression of fundamental freedoms and governance failures in areas under its illegal and forcible occupation," he said.

The spokesperson alleged that Pakistani authorities had responded to public dissent through harsh measures, including restrictions on movement, internet shutdowns and action against civilians.

India also urged the international community to take note of developments in PoK and hold Pakistan accountable for what it described as violations of democratic and human rights norms.

The treaty, signed in 1960 with the World Bank as a guarantor, governs the sharing of waters of the Indus river system between India and Pakistan.

Under the arrangement, Pakistan receives waters from the western rivers -- the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab -- while India has rights over the eastern rivers -- Ravi, Beas and Sutlej -- along with limited use of the western rivers for domestic, agricultural and hydroelectric purposes.

India has repeatedly maintained that terrorism and normal bilateral engagement cannot go together, and has linked recent measures against Pakistan to concerns over cross-border terror activities. (KNO)

Polish donor helps

expanding donor registries can greatly improve the chances of finding compatible donors for those in need.

He announced that SKIMS would actively promote donor registration and make information related to donor registries available through its official platforms to encourage wider community participation.

According to the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the highly specialised procedure was performed by the Department of Clinical Haematology. Experts from the department, including Head of Department Prof Sajad Geelani, Associate Professors Dr Reshma Roshan and Dr Afaq Ahmad Khan, said the transplant programme at SKIMS is being conducted according to national and international standards and has achieved outcomes comparable to leading transplant centres.

They explained that Matched Unrelated Donor transplantation is among the most complex procedures in modern medicine, involving extensive donor-recipient matching, international coordination, advanced laboratory support and intensive clinical monitoring. The successful completion of the procedure required seamless coordination from donor identification to stem cell collection and transportation across international borders.

The specialists noted that for many patients suffering from severe haematological and immunological disorders, a suitable family donor is often unavailable. In such cases, a matched unrelated donor transplant may be the only curative treatment option. They stressed that the success of this case highlights the need to strengthen transplant programmes, expand awareness about stem cell donation and enhance collaboration with national and international donor registries.

The Department of Clinical Haematology expressed gratitude to the SKIMS administration and DKMS for their support in making the treatment possible. Special appreciation was also extended to faculty members, resident doctors, transplant coordinators, nursing staff, blood bank teams, laboratory scientists, technicians, pharmacists, infection control personnel, intensive care staff and other supporting departments whose collective efforts contributed to the success of the complex procedure.

The child's father, Mohammad Ashraf Shaikh, shared an emotional account of the family's journey. Having lost his first daughter to HLH two years ago, he said the family had consulted several medical centres outside the region before finding hope at SKIMS. He thanked the doctors and hospital administration for assuring him that the disease was treatable and for successfully carrying out the transplant that has given his second child a new chance at life. (KNO)

India, US begin high-level trade talks, rework deal amid tariff changes

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 23: India and the United States opened high-level trade talks on Tuesday aimed at salvaging and recalibrating a proposed bilateral trade agreement after changes in US tariff policy upended a framework negotiated earlier this year.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal met US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer here as both sides sought to conclude an interim trade pact before July 24, when Washington's temporary 10 per cent tariff on imports from trading partners is due to expire.

"Warm welcome to @USTradeRep Amb Jamieson Greer, @USAmbIndia Amb Sergio Gor and their delegation to @DoC_GoI. Looking forward to productive discussions on the bilateral trade agreement between (India & US)," Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said in a post on X.

Greer's two-day visit comes days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump held their first meeting in more than a year on the sidelines of the G7 summit in France on June 17, injecting fresh momentum into trade negotiations that both sides see as critical to strengthening economic ties.

The talks are focused on reworking a framework agreement announced in February that was built around tariff commitments later rendered uncertain by a US Supreme Court ruling striking down sweeping tariffs announced by Trump.

The meeting at Vanijya Bhanwan, the headquarters of the



commerce ministry, is also being attended by Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal and India's chief negotiator Darpan Jain, sources said.

It follows chief negotiator-level discussions held in New Delhi earlier this month (June 2-4).

Securing preferential tariff treatment has become a central objective for New Delhi after changes in US trade policy eroded an advantage India had expected to enjoy over regional competitors such as Vietnam and other ASEAN economies.

Under the February framework, the United States had agreed to reduce tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent, lower than duties facing several competing exporters. However, the subsequent court ruling and Washington's decision to impose a temporary 10 per cent tariff on imports from all countries have forced both sides to revisit key elements of the arrangement.

Agrawal on June 15 stated that the discussions between the two sides are expected to be centred around giving final touches to the framework deal.

On June 17, US President

Donald Trump said the two countries are "very close" to finalise the trade agreement.

Earlier on June 5, Goyal said India and the US are moving towards closing all open ends of the interim trade agreement, and both sides are likely to execute the "very, very vibrant" first phase of the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by the middle of next month.

Both sides in February announced the contours of the first phase of the BTA. The framework was based on the 50 per cent tariffs imposed by the US on Indian goods. However, on February 20, the US Supreme Court struck down the sweeping tariffs imposed by the Trump administration.

The Trump-administration then announced 10 per cent tariffs under Section 122 of the Trade Act on all countries for 150 days on February 24. It will expire on July 24 this year.

The meeting between the two sides is important on account of these changes in the US tariff regime.

India and the US formally launched BTA negotiations on February 13, 2025. On February 7, 2026, the two sides

announced that they had reached a framework for an interim agreement regarding reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade.

According to that framework, the US had agreed to reduce tariffs on India to 18 per cent from 50 per cent. It had removed the 25 per cent tariffs on Indian goods for buying Russian oil and was to cut the remaining 25 per cent to 18 per cent under the pact. But the US Supreme Court ruled against these tariffs.

Under the agreed framework, India proposed to eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of food and agricultural products, including Dried Distillers' Grains (DDGs), red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products.

New Delhi has also expressed its intentions to purchase USD 500 billion of US energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products, and coking coal over the next five years.

As the tariff landscape changed in the US, both sides

are relooking at the agreement's framework.

The February joint statement on the framework has a clause that, in the event of any changes to the agreed-upon tariffs of either country, the US and India agree that the other country may modify its commitments.

Meanwhile, the US Trade Representative launched two Section 301 investigations on March 11 and 12 covering about 60 economies. One focused on alleged excess industrial capacity, while the other examined forced-labour concerns in global supply chains. India was included in both investigations.

When the framework of the first phase of the agreement was finalised, India had a comparative advantage over its competitor countries, such as ASEAN nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia), Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Under the framework, the US had announced an 18 per cent tariff on Indian goods. At that time, tariffs on India's competing countries ranged from 19 to 20 per cent. But now, all countries face the same 10 per cent additional levy.

The US was the second-largest trading partner of India in 2025-26.

India's outbound shipments to the US grew marginally by 0.92 per cent to USD 87.3 billion during the last fiscal year, while imports increased 15.95 per cent to USD 52.9 billion. The trade surplus declined to USD 34.4 billion in 2025-26 from USD 40.89 billion in 2024-25.

Opening of Strait of Hormuz welcome move: NSA Doval at BRICS conclave



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 23: The opening of the Strait of Hormuz is a very welcome move as it will help energy security, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval said on Tuesday while welcoming counterparts from BRICS nations at a key conclave here.

Doval said freedom of navigation through the key shipping lane will benefit the countries of the region and beyond.

"India welcomes the MoU reached between the US and Iran. We have got cautious optimism, and we hope that it will work. It will help energy security," Doval said.

"The opening of the Strait of Hormuz is a very welcome development. It will remove supply chain bottlenecks and (address) shortages in sectors like fertilisers and chemicals," he said.

Doval also delved into geopolitical tensions witnessed in various geographies and their impact on various countries.

"We are meeting at a very tumultuous time. The world is facing geopolitical uncertainties, economic strains, and disruptive technology," Doval said.

"Not only that the threats are compounding, but the instruments and institutional mechanisms are

increasingly finding themselves to be inadequate to resolve or mitigate these conflicts," he said.

"Multilateralism is on the decline," he said, adding BRICS has a major role to play in addressing various challenges.

"BRICS was conceived as an informal grouping of emerging economies to a more multipolar world order. It was to advance economic cooperation and strengthen the voice of the Global South," he said.

Doval said BRICS also envisioned reforms in global governance and institutional improvements.

"BRICS is a very special coalition of countries that believe in peace, progress, development, and cooperation," he added.

New Delhi is hosting the conclave in its capacity as the current chair of the influential grouping.

BRICS, originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, expanded in 2024 to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with Indonesia joining in 2025.

BRICS has emerged as an influential grouping as it brings together 11 major emerging economies of the world, representing around 49.5 per cent of the global population, around 40 per cent of the global GDP and around 26 per cent of the global trade.

Telegram operational for some existing users, remains delisted on app stores



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 23: Instant messaging app Telegram became operational for some existing users on Tuesday morning but remained delisted on application stores of Google and Apple.

The government had temporarily imposed a blanket ban on Telegram until June 22 and sources indicated that there is no change or extension of timelines in the order.

Email queries to Google and Apple did not elicit an immediate response in this regard.

The government had ordered the ban on Telegram following its failure to prevent the circulation of fake examination papers of NEET exam, dissemination of misleading information and other fraudulent activities that impacted the examination process.

Before imposing the ban,

government officials met Telegram representatives on June 3 where these concerns were flagged.

Thereafter, the Centre decided to block the app and its associated web links, including the web version, till June 22.

Telegram has also been directed to block its message editing feature till June 30.

The NEET re-examination was conducted on June 21 and so far there has been no report of any fraudulent activity.

Telegram Founder and CEO Pavel Durov had criticised India's IT ministry for banning Telegram for one week because some users shared leaked exam questions. He alleged that Reliance, in which Meta has a partial stake, may have lobbied, along with its competitor WhatsApp, to impose the ban on the company's app in the country.

'Imperative for India, China to respect each other's core interests'

PTI

Beijing, Jun 23: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has said that it is "imperative" for India and China to respect each other's "core interests" and take concrete actions to implement the "important consensus" reached by the leaders of both countries.

Wang, who is in New Delhi to attend the BRICS NSA conference, made the remarks during his meeting with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Monday, according to China's state-run Xinhua news agency.

During their meeting, Wang and Doval discussed the bilateral relations and progress of the normalisation process.

Both Wang and Doval are the Special Representatives of the India-China border issue.

India is an important neighbour of China, and bilateral relations have returned to the track of recovery and improvement, said Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the ruling Communist Party of China and director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs.

Wang noted that the leaders of the two countries agreed that China and India are partners instead of rivals, thus forming the most important strategic consensus between the two sides, providing an important impetus and strategic guarantee for the healthy and stable development of China-India



relations, according to an official press release issued here on Monday night on the Doval-Wang meeting.

As the two economies with the largest populations, China and India should not only view bilateral relations from a long-term perspective, but also promote cooperation between the two countries from a global perspective, Wang said.

He noted that both sides should take concrete actions to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, promote their respective development and revitalisation through cooperation, and accelerate the modernisation process of the Global South.

"It is imperative to respect each other's core interests, properly handle sensitive issues, and place the China-India border issue in an appropriate

position, so that it doesn't affect the overall situation of bilateral relations," Wang said.

He also underlined the need to advance the restoration of dialogue mechanisms and promote exchanges in various fields, such as trade, finance, law enforcement and media, Xinhua reported, quoting the official press release.

The two sides should also actively guide all sectors of society to form a correct understanding, and lay a solid public opinion and social foundation for improving bilateral relations, Wang added.

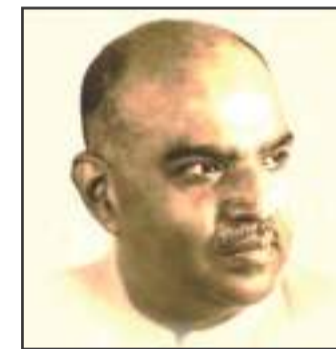
In New Delhi, External Affairs Ministry spokesman Ran-dhir Jaiswal on Monday said that the Doval-Wang discussions were "constructive and forward-looking".

"NSA Doval underlined that stable, predictable and constructive bilateral relations contribute to building of trust and better understanding between the two sides," he said.

India and China rolled out a series of measures in the last over one year to rebuild their relationship after it witnessed a major downturn following the deadly Galwan Valley clashes in 2020 and the subsequent military face-off that lasted for over four years.

In August last year, Doval and Wang held Special Representatives dialogue in New Delhi that produced a number of outcomes to maintain peace along the border.

BJP chief pays tribute to Syama Prasad Mookerjee



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 23: BJP president Nitin Nabin on Tuesday paid tributes to Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his death anniversary, and remembered him as an ardent nationalist and a great thinker.

Paying homage to Mookerjee, Nabin said abrogating Article 370 of the Constitution was a "true tribute" to the Jan Sangh founder.

On August 5, 2019, the Modi government abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution, which had accorded special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Mookerjee died under mysterious circumstances on this day in 1953 in a Srinagar jail after being arrested for entering Jammu and Kashmir without a permit.

The BJP observes the day as 'Balidan Diwas' (day of sacrifice) every year.

"Today, on the 73rd martyrdom anniversary of the revered Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, I pay my respectful tribute to him. He

was an ardent nationalist and a great thinker. He was the first Industry Minister of the country. The dream that he saw and for which he sacrificed, the significance of that sacrifice is visible to all of us," Nabin told reporters.

"I certainly believe that abrogating Article 370 under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a true tribute to Syama Prasad Mookerjee," the BJP chief said after paying floral tributes to the Jan Sangh leader at the BJP headquarters here.

Nabin said Mookerjee had struggled to protect the demography and borders of West Bengal, Assam and Punjab as well.

The recent formation of the BJP government in West Bengal, Mookerjee's birthplace, indicates that the people of the state are with the party, he said.

"So, we can say that the dream Syama Prasad Mookerjee jid had for India is being fulfilled by our leader Narendra Modi. And, today, the workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and our leader Narendra Modi are paying him a true tribute by completing his tasks," Nabin said.

The BJP chief noted that Mookerjee had established the Jan Sangh in 1951 with the "thought and sentiment" that it would lead a nationalist ideology.

"Today, more than 14 crore workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party are engaged in taking India forward with that nationalist ideology under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Nabin added.

Shinde mocks Sena (UBT) over split in MP ranks Says 'Jor ka Jhatka' disturbed their mental balance

PTI

Mumbai, Jun 23: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday mocked Shiv Sena (UBT) in the assembly over a split in the ranks of its Lok Sabha MPs, saying the opposition members have lost their mental balance due to the "jor ka jhatka" and "more shocks" are in store.

The sharp jibe followed a walkout by MLAs of Sena (UBT), led by Aaditya Thackeray, and other opposition parties from the House, objecting to ministers replying to questions related to other departments.

The Opposition took exception to Speaker Rahul Narwekar delegating the responsibility of certain departments to a few ministers during the ongoing monsoon session.



Jayant Patil (NCP SP) demanded that the Speaker's decision be withdrawn, while Aaditya Thackeray said only Ministers of State of the related department can answer to issues raised in the House. Nitin Raut (Congress) said such things haven't happened before. Shinde said

the Opposition had run out of issues and was indulging in disruptions instead of participating constructively in the proceedings.

"Assigning ministers to answer questions and calling attention motions ensured that members received more information. Attending the House and replying to members is a collective responsibility of the government," Shinde said.

I personally come to the House, and the Chief Minister himself comes and gives replies. Therefore, it is our collective responsibility, he said.

Taking a dig at the protesting members, the Shiv Sena leader said "Whatever responsibility has been entrusted must be discharged. You cannot simply keep uttering something or the other, indulge in meaningless chatter

and waste the time of the House."

Pointing to the empty benches, Shinde said they (Opposition) don't know what is happening to them.

"Yesterday they got a 'Jor ka jhatka'. Their mental balance is disturbed, and more shocks are in the store for them," he said, apparently referring to six dissident Lok Sabha MPs from the Uddhav Thackeray camp joining the Shiv Sena a day before.

On Monday, all six rebel Lok Sabha members from the Shiv Sena (UBT) officially crossed over to the Shinde-led Shiv Sena, formalising another split in the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction.

He further said the Opposition has the right to raise issues concerning the people of Maharashtra.

Pentagon seeks \$80 billion from Congress for Iran war

AP

Washington, Jun 23: The Pentagon has told senators it needs roughly USD 80 billion, mostly to cover the cost of the US war against Iran, adding to what is already a sizable military spending boost being sought by President Donald Trump.

The White House Office of Management and Budget has yet to make a formal request to Congress. But Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has been making the rounds on Capitol Hill, including Monday evening.

A top deputy defence secretary told senators about the Iran funding request last week, according to two people familiar with the situation but not authorised to discuss it publicly.

The Wall Street Journal first reported on the developments.

Push for Pentagon money faces skeptical lawmakers

The push for billions of dollars in Iran war funding comes at a fraught political moment. Lawmakers are skeptical of the deal Trump struck with Iran to bring an end to the war, and wary of next steps.

The White House has requested a remarkable USD 1.5 trillion for the Pentagon – a nearly 50 per cent increase over the current fiscal year's funding levels.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune said he's expecting a supplemental spending request from the administration for the war, and when it arrives, "we'll work through it and see where the votes are".

"We need to make sure we're doing everything we can to replenish, resupply a lot of our munitions that have been depleted – not only



just with what's happening with Iran, but prior to that," Thune said.

Deputy Defence Secretary Stephen Feinberg spoke to several senators about the proposal in calls last week and he notified congressional committees that the USD 80 billion request had been sent to the Office of Management and Budget. The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

However, the funding package will almost certainly run into trouble from lawmakers who refuse to support Trump's decision to go to war and are reluctant to give the Pentagon more money at a time of high costs of living for Americans at home.

"You're spending families' hard-earned tax dollars on a war that many strongly oppose," Democratic Senator Patty Murray told Hegseth in a hearing last month.

Trump seeks record USD 1.5 trillion for defence this year

In addition to the Iran funding, Republicans hope to secure about USD 1.1 trillion through the regular appropriations process, which

typically requires support from both parties for approval. Then, they hope to secure an additional USD 350 billion through a mostly party-line vote later this summer.

The amount being sought by the Pentagon is far higher than the USD 29 billion estimate of war costs that Hegseth gave Congress during his testimony last month.

The bulk of that amount was related to replacing munitions and repairing equipment but also included operational costs to keep forces deployed. That estimate did not include the cost to repair or rebuild US military sites damaged in the region.

It's also far lower than the initial USD 200 billion the Pentagon floated as the costs at the start of the war. An early estimate put the cost of the first week of the war at USD 11.3 billion.

Senator Brian Schatz of Hawaii, a member of Democratic party leadership, said he expects the actual price tag could be much higher than the USD 80 billion being proposed. Schatz said he hasn't done any

counting of Democrats about whether there is support for an Iran-focused bill, "but I haven't found anyone who wants to do this".

But Republican Senator Jim Banks of Indiana said, "To me it's less about the war, it's more about the stockpiles."

Banks said, "I would sell it to my state as an investment in our defense industrial base, reshoring defense production to Indiana."

Senator Jack Reed, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said funding for an Iran supplemental can't be done in isolation.

It has to be done after lawmakers from both parties have agreed to a total spending amount for both defense and non-defense programs, "then the rest of this would follow pretty quickly", Reed said.

And Senator John Hoeven of North Dakota, a member of the Appropriations subcommittee on Defence, said he has been working with the administration to broaden the package to include funds for disaster aid for California, Hawaii and other states hard hit by fires and weather problems, as well as agricultural aid for farmers.

"I think that's the kind of combination that could pass," Hoeven said. Hegseth declined to answer questions from reporters late Monday as he strode around the Capitol.

But on the issue of the cost of the war, Hegseth responded rhetorically during a Senate hearing last month, asking, "What is the cost of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon?"

He acknowledged the president's decision to confront the threat of a nuclear Iran "comes with cost – and we recognise that."

Cycling will aid India's march towards developed nation status: Mandaviya

PTI

Thiruvananthapuram, Jun 23: Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Mansukh Mandaviya, on Tuesday said that cycling has a significant role to play in India's journey towards becoming a developed nation.

He was addressing participants while taking part in the Cycling by the Sea event, organised by the Sports Authority of India here as part of the Fit India Movement.

The cycling rally was held from Chacka ITI to Shanghumukham Beach.

Speaking on the occasion, Mandaviya said that a healthy nation can only be built through healthy citizens and described cycling as the key to a healthy lifestyle.

He pointed out that, besides promoting good health, cycling also helps reduce pollution, ease traffic congestion and conserve fuel. Urging people to make cycling a regular habit, the minister also highlighted the Sundays on Cycle initiative under the Fit India Movement.

Mandaviya noted that the Sundays on Cycle programme, which began at just 200 locations, has now expanded to 10,000 locations, with nearly 2,00,000 people participating. He also congratulated the children and youth who have been actively taking part in the initiative.

The Union Minister joined the cycling rally



from Chacka ITI to Shanghumukham Beach alongside women's groups comprising ASHA workers and Kudumbashree members, athletes from the Sports Authority of India, and cycling enthusiasts.

Thiruvananthapuram City Corporation Mayor V V Rajesh accompanied the Minister during the event.

The rally, participated in by around 200 people, was flagged off at Chacka by BJP MLA V Muraleedharan and Arjuna Award winner P R Sreejesh. A Zumba session for participants was also conducted ahead of the rally, according to an official statement.

The initiative was organised to promote Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Fit India Movement, to encourage people to adopt an active and healthy lifestyle through cycling and other physical fitness activities, it added.

Turkiye arrests over 200 before NATO summit



AFP

Istanbul, Jun 23: Turkish police on Tuesday arrested more than 200 people suspected of links to the Islamic State and outlawed far-left groups, officials said, before an upcoming NATO summit.

The Ankara prosecutor's office said 209 people had been detained in the capital, while 32 others remained at

large. Of those held, 185 are suspected of membership in several far-left organizations designated as terrorist groups by Ankara.

They include the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C), which has claimed responsibility for attacks in Turkey in the past. Authorities said the operations targeted multiple groups as part of broader security measures.

North Korea's Kim vows to accelerate military buildup

AFP

Seoul, Jun 23: Kim Jong Un vowed to beef up North Korea's defense capabilities, citing military modernization efforts by South Korea and the United States pushing the region "to the brink of a nuclear war," state media reported Tuesday.

Pyeongyang is under multiple sets of sanctions over its nuclear program, and the two Koreas remain technically at war because their 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

Kim "in his concluding



speech reaffirmed the steadfast policy stand of our Party and state to beef up the national defense capabilities faster," the official Korean Central News Agency quoted the leader as saying. The speech was

delivered as Kim presided over a three-day meeting of the Workers' Party of Korea that wrapped up on Monday, during which senior officials reviewed policy initiatives, KCNA said.

It quoted Kim as saying "the US and the ROK are pushing forward with the ROK's possession of a nuclear submarine while getting evermore undisguised in their moves toward the reinforcement and modernization of armed forces in the region," referring to South Korea by the acronym of its official name.

Guinness crowns Canberra town crier as world's loudest person at 122.4 decibels

AP

Melbourne, Jun 23: Joseph McGrail-Ba-teup, an Australian professional air conditioner cleaner and honorary town crier, has been recognised as the world's loudest person.

Guinness World Records last week acknowledged the 58-year-old Canberra resident recorded the loudest ever shout by an individual. He yelled "now" at 122.4 decibels.

That broke the previous record of 121.7 dB set by Northern Ireland schoolteacher Annalisa Flanagan in 1994. She had yelled an ear-piercing "quiet".

That is in the noise range of a chain saw, a jet aircraft taking off and an ambulance siren at close range.

A dream is fulfilled, and words can't explain it: Sooryavanshi on India selection

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 23: Teenaged batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi says getting selected in the Indian T20 squad is the "biggest step" of his nascent career so far and he does not have words to describe how it feels.

The 15-year-old was included in the India squad for the tours of Ireland and England starting June 26 after a stellar run in the IPL 2026, where he scored 776 runs for Rajasthan Royals at a strike-rate over 230.

"Words can't explain it. The reason I picked up a bat from day one and went to the cricket ground for practice, and today that dream is



fulfilled," Sooryavanshi said in a brief video posted by BCCI on its social media handles.

"The biggest step in the journey was completed today. I truly cannot put this feeling into words," he added.

Sooryavanshi started his

cricketing journey from the humble surroundings of Samastipur in Bihar and came to limelight in IPL 2025, scoring a marauding hundred against Gujarat Titans.

At 14 years and 32 days then, he remains the youngest centurion in T20 cricket with his 38-ball 101 on April 28, 2025 against Gujarat.

Now, the left-hander's national debut might happen in Belfast against Ireland either on June 26 or 28.

If he appears against either Ireland or England, Sooryavanshi could become the youngest ever international cricketer for India at 15, surpassing the great Sachin Tendulkar's record of 16 years and 205 days.

Pant takes big pay cut to rejoin DC for Rs 15 crore

Kuldeep goes to LSG

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 23: Rishabh Pant took a massive pay cut of Rs 12 crore after two underwhelming seasons as the Lucknow Super Giants' captain and Delhi Capitals wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav were involved in a high-profile trade off completed on Tuesday.

Pant returns to the Capitals for

Rs 15 crore. The LSG had acquired his services for a whopping Rs 27 crore, highest ever in the history of the league, in the mega auction ahead of IPL 2025.

Incidentally, LSG owner Sanjiv Goenka back in the day, had claimed that the deal with Pant will be a long-term one but only after two disappointing seasons, the LSG owners with tacit support from Australian heavy coaching staff (Justin

Langer and Tom Moody) decided on releasing the flamboyant keeper-batter.

In an expected trade-off, left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav went from the Capitals to LSG at his existing fee of Rs 13.50 crore.

Pant will now reconnect with the franchise for whom he had played 111 matches between 2016 and 2024, before leaving to take part in the auction.

Movies List

— WEDNESDAY • 24 JUNE —

		<p>OBSESSION (ENGLISH) (A) 11:10 AM</p>
		<p>MAIN VAAPAS AAUNGA (HINDI) (U/A16+) 11:40 AM, 02:00 PM, 06:15 PM</p>
		<p>COCKTAIL 2 (A) (HINDI) (ATMOS) 01:30 PM, 07:30 PM (HINDI) 11:00 AM, 03:15 PM, 05:20 PM</p>
		<p>TOY STORY 5 (3D ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES) (U) 04:30 PM</p>

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