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Department of Information & Public Relations, J&K

DIPK-2570/26 Dated: 25.06.2026

Amarnath Yatra India's most revered spiritual pilgrimage: LG Sinha

- Needs to be passed on to future gen as priceless cultural, divine tradition
- Pilgrims act as ambassadors of Kashmir's culture, harmony, hospitality
- Yatra reflects country's spiritual legacy, unity in diversity

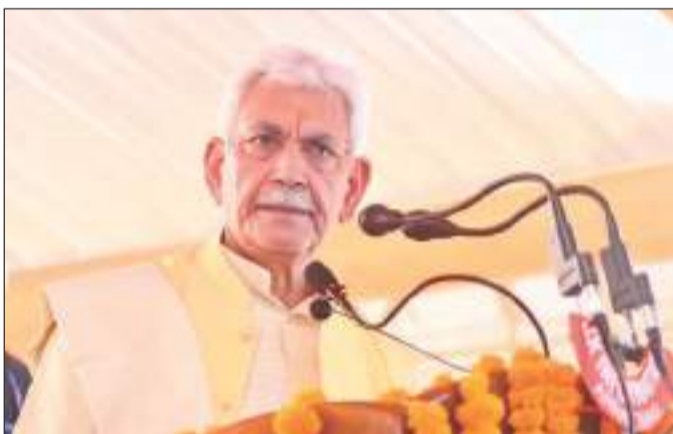
Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jun 25: Terming Amarnath Yatra as India's most revered spiritual pilgrimage and a powerful symbol of the country's cultural heritage, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said that it needs to be preserved, strengthened and passed on to future generations as a priceless cultural and divine tradition.

Addressing the valedictory session of the International Conference on Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra, organised by Government Degree College for Women, Anantnag in collaboration with the District Administration Anantnag, the Lieutenant Governor, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said that the pilgrimage has immense potential to emerge as a major centre of global spiritual tourism and contribute significantly towards Jammu and Kashmir's economy and development.

He described the holy pilgrimage as a living expression of India's spiritual consciousness and civilizational ethos.

LG Sinha said the



centuries-old Yatra must be preserved, strengthened and passed on to future generations as a priceless cultural and spiritual tradition. According to him, the pilgrimage serves as a journey of devotion, patience and self-discovery, encouraging devotees to seek inner peace and connect with the divine.

"The Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra represents social unity and spiritual awakening. It reminds us that true faith transcends divisions and inspires people to discover the light within themselves," LG Sinha said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted the unique role played by local communities in making the pilgrimage successful. He noted that families from different backgrounds and faiths have been serving pilgrims for generations, reflecting the spirit of coexistence and mutual respect that defines the Yatra.

"At a time when many societies across the world are witnessing increasing divisions, the Amarnath Yatra presents a remarkable example of communal harmony and human solidarity. It demonstrates | More on P6

Ensure seamless arrangements for Amarnath Yatris: LG Sinha

Reviews preparations in Pahalgam, says admin, security agencies, local stakeholders fully geared up



Jahangeer Ganaie

Pahalgam, Jun 25: Ahead of the commencement of the annual Amarnath Yatra, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday chaired a high-level review meeting at Pahalgam, base camp for pilgrimage, to assess the preparedness and arrangements put in place for the smooth conduct of the annual yatra slated to commence on July 3.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the Lieutenant Governor reviewed security and logistical arrangements and took stock of facilities being established for the thousands of devotees expected to undertake the annual pilgrimage to the holy cave shrine.

LG Sinha also visited the Nunwan Base Camp, where he inspected | More on P6

Police launch 'Hawk Eye Project' to monitor Amarnath Yatra 24x7

416 CCTV cameras, drones deployed along pilgrimage route

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 25: Jammu and Kashmir Police have launched "Project Hawk Eye", a technology-driven surveillance initiative for round-the-clock monitoring of the Amarnath Yatra route, as security agencies intensified preparations for the annual pilgrimage scheduled to commence on July 3.

The initiative, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) was unveiled by Anantnag Police as part of an expanded security grid for the forth coming Amarnath Yatra.

As part of Project Hawk Eye, Anantnag Police have deployed five drone units for aerial surveillance along the yatra route. Twenty-eight elevated observation posts, or



Machan Morchas, have been established at vulnerable locations, while 22 sniper teams have been positioned to reinforce the security grid.

Police have also installed 416 high-resolution CCTV cameras and facial recognition system infrastructure at critical points to enable real-time monitoring and early detection of | More on P6

Maintain tight vigil: DGP directs officials

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jun 25: Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat on Thursday chaired a high-level review meeting to assess overall preparedness for the forthcoming Amarnath Yatra and ongoing counter-terror operations across Kashmir. The meeting, according to the news agency—Kashmir News | More on P6

LG, CM recall sacrifices of Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS), companions

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 25: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday recalled the sacrifices of Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) on the eve of Ashura, the 10th day of Muharram.

In his message, the Lieutenant Governor, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said: "The supreme sacrifices of Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) and his companions at Karbala remain a timeless beacon for humanity, upholding truth, justice, and human dignity.

Let us resolve to imbibe these universal ideals and work together to build | More on P6

Gulmarg Gondola resumes; CM says passenger safety was priority

Omar announces Rs 50,000 reward for rescue staff, regularisation



Waris Fayaz

Gulmarg, Jun 25: After remaining suspended for a month following a technical fault that left more than 300 tourists stranded mid-air, the Gulmarg Gondola resumed

operations on Thursday, with Chief Minister Omar Abdullah asserting that safety considerations took precedence over pressure for an early reopening. He announced a cash reward of Rs 50,000 each for employees who | More on P6

Safety, not revenue our concern: Dir Tourism

Waris Fayaz

As the operations of Gulmarg Gondola resumed on Thursday, Director Tourism Kashmir, Syed Qamar Sajjad, said that safety of tourists is the foremost priority for the administration. Speaking after Chief Minister Omar Abdullah flagged off the Gondola service in Gulmarg, the Director, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said the decision to restart operations was taken only | More on P6

LG thanks Gadkari for restoration of vital bridges

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 25: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday expressed gratitude to the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari for the restoration of two vital bridges on National Highway-44.

"Great news ahead of the upcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra. The two vital bridges over the Ravi River and Sehar Khad near Kalibari on NH-44, which were damaged in last year's flash floods, have been successfully restored. Deeply thankful to Hon'ble Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari Ji for reinstating this crucial link. This will immensely | More on P6

LG highlights life, teachings of Shivacharya Abhinavgupta



KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 25: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha attended Rudra Abhishek ceremony on the auspicious occasion of Shivacharya Abhinavgupta Jayanti and Nirjala Ekadashi at Shri Anandishwar Bhairav Nath Ji Maharaj Asthapan, Maisuma, Srinagar, on

Thursday. He interacted with the devotees and extended his heartiest greetings.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor observed that Shri Anandishwar Bhairav Nath Ji Maharaj Asthapan continues to occupy a cherished place in the collective consciousness of Jammu Kashmir. He offered | More on P6

Max speed on Banihal-Qazigund rail section increased to 100 km/h

KNO Correspondent

Srinagar, Jun 25: In a major boost to rail connectivity in Kashmir, Northern Railways Jammu Division has approved an increase in the maximum permissible speed of trains on the Banihal-Qazigund single-line electrified section from 75 km/h to 100 km/h.

In a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Northern Railway's Jammu Division said the decision marks a significant step towards improving railway operations and passenger services in the Valley.

It said the increase in speed

on the 17-kilometre Banihal-Qazigund stretch will lead to a reduction in train running time, enabling faster movement of trains and improving overall operational efficiency.

The division said the enhanced speed will also increase line capacity and provide additional time for maintenance activities, thereby contributing to safer train operations and quicker clearance of tracks for other services.

According to the statement, the move is expected to improve the punctuality of trains operating up to Qazigund, Anantnag and Srinagar, reducing delays and ensuring a more

reliable travel experience for commuters.

The railway authorities said the speed enhancement is not only aimed at saving travel time but will also contribute to the socio-economic development of the Kashmir Valley by strengthening transport infrastructure and improving connectivity.

Reiterating its commitment to passenger welfare, Northern Railway said it remains focused on providing safe, fast and comfortable travel facilities to the public.

The division also appealed to passengers to follow all safety instructions during travel and cooperate in | More on P6

GoI clears J&K's first national Centre of Excellence in sports

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 25: In a major boost to the sports ecosystem of Jammu & Kashmir, the Government of India has accorded approval for the establishment of the first National Centre of Excellence (NCOE) in Sports for J&K, to come up in Kashmir. The proposed Centre, to be developed in Kashmir, marks a transformative step in positioning Jammu & Kashmir as a premier destination for high altitude sports, elite athlete development, advanced sports science, and world-class training infrastructure.

Expressing gratitude on the occasion, Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha thanked Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Hon'ble Union Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, for approving the landmark project, which will create a new era of sporting opportunity for the youth of Jammu & Kashmir.

"This state-of-the-art Centre will bring world-class infrastructure and elite coaching right to our Union Territory, training the next generation of Olympic and international champions," the Lieutenant | More on P6

CM Omar chairs LCMA board meet



Directs expedited conservation of Dal, Nigeen, Khushalsar, Gilsar

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jun 25: Chief

Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday chaired the 27th Board of Directors meeting of the Jammu & Kashmir Lake Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA) at SKICC to review the | More on P6

Ensure traceability, quality compliance, consumer safety: FDA to FBOs

Issues advisory to FBOs on safe procurement, use of Milk Products

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 25: In view of the extensive consumption of milk and milk products by the general public and their widespread use in hotels, restaurants, catering establishments, cafes, sweet shops, bakeries and other food vending establishments, the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA), Jammu & Kashmir, has issued an advisory to all Food Business Operators (FBOs) regarding the procurement, storage, use and sale of milk and milk products.

Commissioner, Food and Drugs Administration, J&K, Khalid Jahangir, as per an official statement, stated that Food Business Operators must adhere to the prescribed standards and safety norms while procuring and using milk and milk products to

ensure food safety, consumer protection and public health.

The advisory states that it has come to the notice of the authorities that in certain instances milk products, particularly Paneer, Ghee and Khoa/Mawa, are being procured, supplied or used without adequate disclosure of the procurement chain, quality assurance mechanisms and traceability records. Such practices may pose serious risks to public health and can mislead consumers regarding the quality and authenticity of food being served.

In this regard, all Food Business Operators, especially hotels, restaurants, catering establishments, cafes, sweet shops, tea stalls, dhabas, itinerant vendors and food vending establishments, have been advised to strictly adhere to the guidelines and instructions issued

through the advisory on key compliance parameters viz. Procurement and traceability of milk and milk products, their notified Standards and Regulatory Compliance with packaging and labelling requirements, consumer information, menu disclosure and Food Safety Display Boards.

The advisory reiterates that under the Food Safety and Standards Regulations, it is prohibited to sell or serve milk containing added water; dahi/curd not prepared from boiled, pasteurized or sterilized milk; skimmed milk as regular milk; milk and milk products containing substances not naturally found in milk, except where specifically permitted under the regulations.

The advisory issued by the Food & Drugs Administration further emphasized that compliance with the Food

Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and regulations framed thereunder is mandatory for all Food Business Operators and all stakeholders dealing in milk and milk products were called upon to strictly adhere to food safety standards and departmental advisories issued from time to time in the interest of public health and consumer welfare.

The Commissioner also appealed to consumers to remain vigilant, read labels and display boards carefully, and report any concerns regarding the quality or safety of food products. Complaints may be lodged through the Toll-Free Number 104, by email at cfsjandk.fnd@jk.gov.in, or through the FSSAI consumer grievance portal <https://fscos.fssai.gov.in/consumergrievance>

DC Shopian chairs monthly NCORD meeting



KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JUNE 25: Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Shishir Gupta, Thursday chaired the monthly District Level NCORD meeting to review the progress of anti-drug abuse initiatives and strengthen measures for curbing drug trafficking and substance abuse in the district.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, reviewed the performance of enforcement departments and the implementation of decisions taken in previous NCORD meetings.

He stressed the need for intensified efforts to identify drug peddlers, dismantle supply networks and strengthen inter-departmental coordination to effectively combat the drug menace.

Reviewing enforcement measures, the meeting was informed that 31 FIRs have been registered against poppy cultivators, while 18 driving licences of persons involved in NDPS-related offences have been suspended. It was further informed that one medical shop has been sealed for violations under the relevant provisions.

The meeting was also informed that out of 27 kilometres of road identified for wild cannabis growth, four kilometres have been cleared through joint action by the Police, Excise Department and the Sub-Divisional Administration.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the Police, Revenue, Excise, PMGSY, R&B, Education and Irrigation Departments to launch coordinated drives for the removal of wild cannabis, particularly in the vicinity of schools, water

bodies, along roads and canals across the district. He emphasises on counselling services be further strengthened at Addiction Treatment Facility at DH Shopian to ensure sustained de-addiction support for victims of substance abuse.

The DC also directed concerned departments to intensify facilitation of registration of recovered victims under various self-employment and livelihood schemes so that they can be rehabilitated economically and reintegrated into society through sustainable means of livelihood.

Emphasising preventive measures, the DC directed the tehsildars to identify suitable land for development of playgrounds in pending panchayats to promote constructive youth engagement. He also instructed the concerned departments to activate Youth Clubs across all panchayats and involve religious leaders, community elders and civil society organisations in strengthening awareness and prevention efforts against drug abuse.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of activities being carried out under the ongoing 100-day Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan and directed all departments to further intensify awareness campaigns to ensure wider impact of the campaign.

Among others, the meeting was attended by SSP Shopian, Mushtaq Ahmad Chaudhary; ADC Shopian, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz; ACR Shopian, Shakoor Ahmad; SDM Zainapora, Bilal Ahmad; SE, R&B, DIO and officers from Health, Education, Excise, MVD, Drug Control, Irrigation, Social Welfare, Tehsildars and other concerned departments.

Nasha Mukta J&K Abhiyan District wide anti drug initiatives continue in Shopian

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JUNE 25: The ongoing 100-Day Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan continues to witness sustained public participation across Shopian district, with a series of awareness, outreach, and preventive initiatives being carried out to strengthen the fight against substance abuse.

As part of the campaign, various government departments, educational institutions, health institutions, civil society organizations, traders' associations, youth groups, and local communities organized activities to spread awareness about the harmful effects of drug abuse and promote a culture of healthy and responsible living.

As part of these initiatives, the Drug Control Organization Shopian, in collaboration with the Chemists and Distributors Association, as per an official statement, organized a drug free awareness rally at Keller.

The rally witnessed active participation from members of the medical fraternity, chemists, civil society, and local residents, reinforcing the message of collective responsibility in preventing substance abuse and building a drug-free society.

Public awareness programmes, rallies, interactive sessions, pledge-taking ceremonies, and community outreach activities were conducted at different locations across the district to educate people, particularly the youth, about the social, legal, and health consequences of drug abuse.

In addition to awareness initiatives, preventive measures also remained a key component of the campaign. A special drive for the identification and eradication of wild Bhung (wild cannabis) continued across various areas of Sub-Division Zainapora with the active involvement of the concerned departments.

The initiative aims to eliminate the illegal growth of narcotic plants and strengthen preventive measures against substance abuse while promoting a safer and drug free environment.

Higher education and youth services department also engaged youth and students in various sports competitions and awareness activities.

DE&CC Srinagar organises Job Fair



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 25: District Employment & Counselling Centre (DE&CC), Srinagar Thursday organized a District-Level Job Fair at Kashmir Government Polytechnic College (GPC), Gogjibagh, Srinagar.

The event was graced by MLA Lal Chowk, Ahsan Pardesi, as the Chief Guest. The Job Fair, as per an official statement, witnessed an overwhelming response from the youth, with around 400 job seekers participating in the event. A total of 15 reputed private companies from diverse sectors participated and offered employment opportunities to aspiring candidates.

In addition to the participating

companies, six line departments established awareness and facilitation stalls to disseminate information regarding various government schemes and livelihood initiatives. A dedicated Mission YUVA Stall was also installed at the venue, which attracted considerable attention and witnessed significant footfall from youth interested in self-employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

During his visit, MLA Lal Chowk, Ahsan Pardesi, toured all the stalls and interacted with representatives of the participating companies, line departments, Mission YUVA officials, and job seekers. He appreciated the efforts of the Employment Department in organizing the

Job Fair and stressed the need for conducting more such programmes in the future to provide enhanced employment opportunities and career guidance to the youth. He observed that such initiatives play a vital role in bridging the gap between employers and job seekers and contribute significantly towards youth empowerment and economic development.

The Job Fair provided an effective platform for direct interaction between employers and job seekers.

Following screening and interviews conducted during the event, 37 candidates were shortlisted by the participating companies for further stages of selection and placement.

CIPMC Srinagar organizes Khet Bachao Abhiyan in Pulwama

KT News Desk

PULWAMA, JUNE 25: Crop Integrated Pest Management Centre (CIPMC), Srinagar, Thursday organized a Khet Bachao Abhiyan at the field of progressive farmer Ghulam Nabi Ganai at Sether Gund village, Kakapora, Pulwama, in collaboration with the Agriculture Department and local farming community.

The programme, as per an official statement, witnessed the participation of around 30 farmers and aimed at promoting sustainable agricultural practices and creating awareness about the conservation of natural resources for safeguarding Mother Earth.

Speaking on the occasion, Assistant Plant

Protection Officer, Abir Shankhari, demonstrated various tools and techniques of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and highlighted the importance of the safe and judicious use of pesticides. He also sensitized farmers about the National Pest Surveillance System (NPSS) Mobile Application and its role in pest monitoring and management. Scientific Assistant, Kawal Nain Singh, delivered an informative lecture on the significance of 100 percent seed treatment and the conservation of natural enemies in crop ecosystems. He also demonstrated the use of neem oil, pesticide label claims, QR code verification, pheromone traps and yellow sticky traps as effective components of eco-friendly pest management.

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

Email: [Email: rb-awantipora@eic.clov.in](mailto:rb-awantipora@eic.clov.in)

NO: T-1/EEA/2317-21

Dated: 25/06/2026

Extension Notice

Subject: - Macadamization of NH-44 to Water Tank via H/o M Ramzan Dar to NH-44.

1. Macadamization of IR of Goripora including Bonpora Wandakpora (Noorabad).
2. Macadamization of Internal Roads of Lethpora.
3. Macadamization of road at Rajpora Tral near Army Camp.
5. Macadamization of Road to Sports ground /Sheep centre to H/O Aijaz Altmad Bhat.
6. Macadamization of road Reshi Mohalla Gadpora Wagard Tral.
7. Macadamization of Widened Shoulders of Hari Kaigam Road.

Reference: -

1. This office e-NIT No.22/EEA/R&B of 2026-27/1680-90 Dated: 06-06-2026.

2. This office e-NIT No.23/EEA/R&B of 2026-27/1694-1704

Dated: 06-06-2026

The critical dates for the above noted Works are hereby extended as under:

1	Bid Submission End Date	02-07-2026 up to 4.00 P.M
2	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	03-07-2026 up to 12.00 P.M

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

DIPK-2551/26
Dated: 25-06-2026

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IMPORTANT ADVISORY

Reports of sudden, premature fruit drop in apple orchards in various areas of the districts Shopian and Anantnag after spray of SUPER M-45 (Mancozeb 75% WP) have raised serious concerns. Consequently, in the interest of safeguarding the fruit crop and protecting orchardists from further economic loss, all the orchardists in the affected zones are advised to cease the spray of "SUPER M-45" (Mancozeb 75% WP) across all apple cultivars until further notice.

NOTE

This restriction operates strictly on a precautionary basis.

Issued in Public interest by; Directorate of Horticulture Kashmir

DIPK-2556/26 Dated: 25-06-2026

'Floating Grief'

Dal Lake's unique Muharram procession keeps centuries-old tradition alive

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 25: As the clock approaches 4 pm, hundreds of black-clad mourners begin a solemn journey into the interiors of Dal Lake, making their way towards one of Kashmir's most unique Muharram processions.

Far from the busy boulevard and the lake's tourist hotspots, the centuries-old tradition unfolds in Kand Mohalla, where devotees gather every year on 9th Muharram to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS) and his companions at Karbala.

Mourners first travel more than a kilometre from the main road into the interior parts of Dal Lake before beginning a walk through a maze of narrow pathways, floating settlements and wooden bridges.

After reaching the lakeside channels, groups of devotees board boats carrying Muharram flags and sail through the lake's hidden waterways before converging at the main gathering point.

For residents of Dal Lake, the journey itself is an inseparable part of the ritual. "We do not just attend the procession, but we walk our history to reach it," Ghulam Hussain, a 68-year-old resident said.

"Our forefathers followed these same routes decades ago. Every Ashura, we retrace their footsteps in remembrance of Imam Hussain (AS)," he said. Far from the tourist image



of Dal Lake, the annual procession transforms its quiet interiors into a sea of mourning. Black flags flutter above narrow wooden bridges

as mourners move through floating hamlets towards the venue. Moments later, boats carrying black-clad devotees and Muharram flags emerge

on the waterways, their reflections shimmering on the calm waters of the lake.

The boat rally remains one of the most striking features of the procession. As flag-bearing boats glide through narrow channels surrounded by reeds and floating settlements, mourners recite elegies in remembrance of Imam Hussain (AS), creating a rare spectacle of faith and devotion in the heart of Dal Lake.

With the Zabarwan hills in the background, devotees move across both water and wooden bridges, creating a scene where faith and landscape merge. The sight of Muharram flags flying over boats and wooden bridges makes this tradition unique in Kashmir.

Entire families, including children and elderly mourners, participate in the centuries-old observance, which has survived political upheaval, conflict and changing social realities over generations.

Residents said the procession is not only a religious observance but also a reflection of the deep relationship between the people and the lake they call home. "Dal Lake is not just the venue for this procession, but it is part of our tradition," said Ali Mohammad, a community elder.

He said people cross waterways, travel in boats and walk over wooden bridges before reaching the gathering point. This is what makes our Muharram procession unique—(KNO)

Srinagar braces for Zuljinah procession today

Traffic curbs across downtown

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 25: As Kashmir prepares to observe Youm-e-Ashura on Friday with religious fervour and solemnity, authorities have put in place elaborate traffic arrangements across Srinagar to ensure the smooth conduct of the traditional Zuljinah procession from Bota Kadal to Imambara Zadihal.

The annual procession, one of the largest Muharram gatherings in the Valley, is expected to draw thousands of mourners commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS) and his companions at Karbala.

In view of the expected rush, the Srinagar Traffic Police on Thursday announced a detailed traffic diversion plan for Zadihal and several adjoining areas.

"The main Zuljinah procession will proceed from Bota Kadal to Imambara Zadihal, and traffic movement in Zadihal and surrounding localities will remain affected during the observance," a traffic advisory reads.

According to the advisory, all traffic moving towards Zadihal from different directions will be diverted at Firdous Cinema, Mill Stop, Lal Bazar and Bota Kadal. Commuters heading towards Hawal Road have been advised to take the Firdous Cinema-Ali Masjid-Sazgaripora route.

Motorists travelling from Karan Nagar and Nallamar towards Soura will be required to use Ali Jan Road, while no right turn towards Sazgaripora will be allowed at Ali Masjid.

Similarly, vehicles coming from Kalai Andhar will not be permitted to proceed towards Zadihal via Firdous Cinema and will instead be diverted towards Sazgaripora or Nowhatta. Traffic from Soura will also not be allowed towards Zadihal beyond Nallalab, with commuters advised to use alternative routes through Zoonimar and Awantibhawan Road.

Authorities have further said vehicles approaching from Lal

NC fulfilled key manifesto commitments in 19 months: Sakeena Ito

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jun 25: Minister Sakeena Ito on Thursday said the Omar Abdullah-led government has fulfilled several major commitments outlined in the National Conference (NC) manifesto and remains committed to delivering on the remaining promises through a people-centric governance approach.

Speaking to reporters after addressing a gathering in Tral, Ito said that a series of welfare initiatives and governance reforms have been undertaken by the government during the past 19 months. She said the administration has focused on improving public services, strengthening accountability, and extending benefits to vulnerable sections of society across Jammu and Kashmir.

Referring to social welfare measures, the minister said the



government had fulfilled its commitment to enhance old-age pensions and marriage assistance schemes.

She pointed to the introduction of free bus travel for women and reforms in the academic calendar as significant steps aimed at easing the burden on citizens

and improving public service delivery.

"We had promised to increase welfare assistance, and today those commitments have been translated into action," she said, adding that the government is steadily implementing its agenda for the welfare of the people.

On governance reforms, Ito

The minister further said the process for providing six free LPG cylinders to eligible beneficiaries is underway and has already received approval. The work is also progressing on electricity subsidies and other measures intended to provide financial relief to households, she added.

Sakeena said the government has significantly strengthened healthcare infrastructure and manpower. "509 doctors were appointed initially, followed by the recruitment of another 424 doctors to improve medical services across the Union Territory," she said. "Dialysis facilities have been expanded in hospitals, and several non-functional oxygen generation plants have been revived to strengthen healthcare preparedness and ensure better treatment facilities for patients."

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Govt mulls summer vacation in July

Sakina Ito interacts with Education Minister of HP

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jun 25: The government Thursday said that it will consider announcing summer vacations for schools of Kashmir division in the month of July. Jammu and Kashmir Education Minister Sakina Ito said, "As of now we have no plans of announcing summer vacations, weather is good for now. The government will think about it in the month of July."

Ito also said that the Jammu and Kashmir government interacted with the Education Minister of Himachal Pradesh. "The education minister of Himachal Pradesh is here in J&K and we shared insights of the school and higher education system of Jammu and Kashmir."

"We discussed reforms and

improvements in the education sector of Jammu and Kashmir be it the results of Board of School Education, syllabi of higher education, introduction of tourism subject and the surge in student enrolment," Ito said.

The minister further said, "We also discussed the infrastructure, teacher training, transfer policy and distribution of free textbooks and uniforms among the students under RTE act. "Most importantly, we discussed the Private University Bill that recently got passed in the Legislative Assembly," she said.

Ito further said, "The education minister also discussed improvements and new initiatives of the education sector of Himachal Pradesh and wherever possible we will try to adopt them in Jammu and Kashmir

and the Himachal government is also mulling the same."

In the meantime, Education Minister of Himachal Pradesh Rohit Thakur said, "I visited several schools of Jammu and Kashmir and I see a good transformation."

"Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh being the hilly terrain regions are adopting best practices for the betterment of the education sector," he said.

Both the ministers focused on the exchange of ideas, best practices and innovative reforms aimed at further strengthening the education sectors of both regions.

In the meantime, the government in a statement said that "Rohit briefed the gathering

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Lavender cultivation emerging as climate-resilient crop: Agri Minister

Jahangeer Ganaie

Anantnag, Jun 25: Minister for Agriculture Production Javid Ahmad Dar on Thursday said the government is actively encouraging farmers to diversify towards crops that are less vulnerable to changing weather patterns and climate-related challenges.

Dar inaugurated the Lavender Festival at the scenic Lavender Farm in Sirhama village of Anantnag district, underscoring the growing importance of aromatic crop cultivation in Kashmir's agricultural landscape.

The event witnessed the participation of MLAs Bashir Ahmad Veeri, Altaf Ahmad Kallio, Advocate Reyaz Ahmad Khan, A.B. Majeed Larmi and several other dignitaries, farmers and agriculture enthusiasts. The sprawling lavender fields, painted in shades of purple, attracted visitors and farmers alike and reflected the region's increasing shift towards high-value aromatic crops.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the event, the Agriculture Minister said, "Climate change has emerged as a major concern for the agricultural sector. We are motivating farmers to adopt crops such as lavender, which are comparatively resilient and offer better economic returns.



These crops not only benefit farmers financially but also contribute positively to the environment and attract tourists."

He said that lavender cultivation has gained significant momentum in recent years, with an increasing number of farmers taking an interest in aromatic farming.

"It is encouraging to see more and more people cultivating lavender. This reflects growing awareness among farmers about the potential of aromatic crops. Such initiatives are helping create new livelihood opportunities and strengthening rural economies,"

Dar added. The minister said the lavender fields have also become a tourist attraction, drawing visitors from different parts of the country and thereby creating additional income opportunities for local communities.

Responding to queries regarding the allotment of shops at various fruit mandis, including Bijbehara, Prichoo in Pulwama, Pachhar in Pulwama, Shopian and other locations, Dar said the government is working on a comprehensive mechanism to ensure transparency and fairness in the allotment process.

"We want to evolve a system that is fair, transparent and inclusive. The objective is to ensure that deserving stakeholders are accommodated and that the process benefits the maximum number of people," he said.

Addressing concerns over the increasing construction activity on fertile agricultural land, the minister acknowledged the challenge posed by population growth and rising housing needs. However, he emphasised that safeguarding cultivable land remains a priority for the government.

"Laws and regulations regarding agricultural land already exist. At the same time, population growth creates

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

M Raju chairs reviews Pulse Polio immunization campaign preparedness

KT News Desk

Jammu, June 25: Commissioner Secretary, Health & Medical Education (H&ME), M Raju on Thursday chaired a detailed meeting of the State Task Force to review the preparedness and micro-planning for the upcoming Pulse Polio National Immunization Day scheduled for Sunday, June 28, 2026.

The comprehensive review meeting saw the active participation of Deputy Commissioners, Chief Medical Officers (CMOs), Director Family Welfare, MCH & Immunization, Director Health Services Jammu and Director Health Services Kashmir.

Speaking at the meeting, M Raju highlighted that while India has proudly maintained its polio-free status since its last wild poliovirus case in January 2011 and the official certification in March 2014, the



threat of re-importation remains critical due to the ongoing transmission in neighboring countries.

The Commissioner Secretary commended the health departments of both the divisions for achieving an exceptionally high and sensitive non-polio Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) surveillance rate. Jammu and Kashmir has recorded an AFP surveillance rate of 6.6 cases per 100,000 population under the 15-year age group, significantly

outperforming the national average of 3.6, thereby meeting and exceeding the target threshold.

To ensure that "no child is missed" during the three-day immunization campaign (June 28-30, 2026), a massive target of 1,891,821 children below the age of 5 years has been established across the Union Territory.

A total of 24,176 vaccine carriers have already been distributed among the secure cold chain logistics at every point.

It was informed in the meeting that the health department has mobilized a combined force of 40,291 vaccinators, 2,610 supervisors, 10,253 vaccination booths, 791 transit points, 337 mela/bazaar sites and 825 mobile teams.

The Commissioner Secretary issued instructions to the Deputy Commissioners and Chief Medical Officers to maintain absolute

coverage (100%) with a rigorous focus on Special Areas and Transit Sites.

It was also instructed to ensure that the Dedicated mobile teams target high-risk areas (HRAs) including nomadic sites, migratory slums, brick kilns, construction zones and industrial areas.

The Transit teams will be ensured at all active railway stations, airports, bus terminals, religious places and tourist/picnic spots.

Concluding the review, M Raju emphasized that the Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) and Deputy CMOs shall liaise with all the concerned line departments to ensure the quality and coverage indicators of the round in coordination with their respective Deputy Commissioners.

He appealed to all parents, citizens, and civil society stakeholders to extend full support to the health workers and ensure that every child under 5 receives the "Two Drops of Life" on June 28, 2026.

EDITORIAL

Friday Brief: Seeking Allah's Pleasure Is Believer's Ultimate Goal

The ultimate purpose of a Muslim's life is to seek the pleasure of Allah. Every act of worship, every ethical choice, and every moment of patience is directed toward this single, profound goal. The Quran and Hadith make it abundantly clear that the success of a believer, both in this world and the Hereafter, depends entirely on earning the pleasure of their Creator. As Allah declares in the Quran: "And the pleasure of Allah is the greatest" (9:72). This verse reminds us

that even the joys of Paradise, immense as they are, pale in comparison to the ultimate reward: being pleased with Allah and being accepted by Him. The Quranic vision of a believer's life is one of constant striving for divine approval. Allah says: "Say, 'Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds'" (6:162). This verse encapsulates the essence of Islamic monotheism—every action, from the most mundane daily activity to the

act of giving one's life, is dedicated solely to Allah. This is the foundation of Ikhlas, or sincerity, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught is the key to salvation. When a believer aligns their intentions with the pleasure of Allah, even the simplest acts like eating, sleeping, or working become acts of worship. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) was the living embodiment of seeking Allah's pleasure. He said, "Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allah at the risk of displeasing

people, Allah will suffice him against the people" (Sunan al-Tirmidhi). This hadith is a powerful guide for navigating life's challenges. In a world where we are constantly pressured to conform to societal expectations, the believer is called to prioritise divine pleasure over popular opinion. This path requires courage, discipline, and unwavering faith. Furthermore, the Prophet taught that the key to achieving this pleasure is to "worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, know that He

sees you" (Sahih al-Bukhari). This principle of Ihsan cultivates a profound consciousness of God's presence, transforming every moment into an opportunity for divine connection. By purifying our intentions and actions, we can navigate the distractions of the world and draw closer to our Creator. True success lies in making Allah's pleasure our highest priority. Let us strive to live our lives as a continuous act of devotion, seeking only His pleasure, for that is the ultimate triumph.

Long Live Democracy: Why Remembering Freedom Matters

The objective of the national commemoration of Samvidhan Hatya Diwas is not merely to remember history, but to reflect on the enduring values that sustain our Republic.

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

Fifty years since the imposition of Emergency, the nation continues to reflect upon this period which is remembered as one of the darkest chapters in India's democratic history. The objective of observance of closing ceremony of the national commemoration of Samvidhan Hatya Diwas - Long Live Democracy (Loktantra Amar Rahe) - is not merely to remember history, but to reflect on the enduring values that sustain our Republic.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar once remarked: "The Constitution is not a mere lawyer's document; it is a vehicle of life, and its spirit is always the spirit of the age."

Few statements capture the essence of our constitutional journey more powerfully than these words. The Constitution is not simply a legal framework that governs the affairs of the State. It is a living covenant between citizens and institutions, between rights and responsibilities, between liberty and accountability.

Democracy Must Be Remembered to be Preserved

India's democratic ethos is deeply rooted in our civilizational traditions. For centuries, our society nurtured institutions of consultation, collective deliberation, and public participation. It is essential to recall that Bharat did not inherit democracy - it nurtured it. From ancient sabhas and samitis to the post-independence parliamentary system, we have always believed in the collective will of the people.

The Constitution transformed these traditions into a modern democratic framework while preserving the values that had sustained them through generations. The Preamble remains our constitutional compass. Justice. Liberty. Equality. Fraternity.

These are not merely constitutional ideals. They are national aspirations. They guide public policy, shape institutions, and define the relationship between the State and the citizen. At the same time, history reminds us that democracy can never be taken for granted.

The Emergency of 1975-77 remains one of the most significant tests faced by independent India. It demonstrated how democratic institutions can come under strain when constitutional safeguards are weakened and public freedoms are curtailed. The impact of that period extended beyond political life. It touched the everyday experiences of citizens across the country. It carried a profound human cost. These experiences serve as a powerful reminder that constitutional rights are not abstract legal principles; they are safeguards that directly shape the dignity, liberty, and everyday lives of citizens. When these rights are curtailed, it is not merely institutions that suffer - it is ordinary people, families, and communities whose freedoms and aspirations are most deeply affected. Yet the enduring lesson of that period is one of democratic resilience.

The people of India demonstrated extraordinary faith in constitutional methods. Democratic processes ultimately corrected democratic distortions. Through peaceful participation and the ballot box, citizens reaffirmed the principle that sovereignty resides with the people. That remains one of the greatest strengths of Indian democracy - its ability to learn, adapt, self-correct, and emerge stronger from periods of challenge.

Marking this occasion, a curated exhibition forms an important segment of the commemoration. It serves as a visual journey through one of the most challenging times in Indian democracy - presenting archival material, stories of resistance,

constitutional milestones and people's experiences during the Emergency. Another crucial element marking the occasion is a special memorial lecture - by Padma Bhushan veteran journalist and author Shri Ram Bahadur Rai - one that lends contemporary relevance to the larger theme of constitutional vigilance and democratic renewal. In contemporary times, nearly eight decades after Independence, the meaning of democracy continues to evolve. Citizens increasingly seek not only representation, but participation. Not only rights, but responsive governance. Initiatives promoting financial inclusion, grassroots participation, and citizen-centric governance have widened the reach of democratic institutions. At the same time, the responsibility of citizenship has become even more important. A strong democracy depends upon informed citizens. Today, when the world turns to India and calls her the "Mother of Democracy", it is a recognition of our long civilizational journey from the dharma of ancient kings to the will of modern voters.

Recovering People's Histories and the Living Legends of Freedom

The components comprising this closing ceremony reflect this broader understanding of democracy as a living and evolving national experience. The exhibition on Digital District Repository (DDR) - a pioneering initiative launched under the commemoration of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) in the year 2021 - aims to bring to the forefront hundreds of lesser-known stories of sacrifice, courage, and public participation from every corner of the country. The Ministry of Culture has also created 10 short films pertaining to these lesser-known narratives from our freedom struggle. Together, these initiatives remind us that democracy is strengthened when constitutional values

are reinforced by cultural memory, historical awareness, and a deep sense of national belonging. So far DDR has more than 19,500 narratives on the dedicated website section.

Among the institutions and departments that have contributed to the DDR initiative, the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) - an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Culture - has played an important role in documenting and curating a substantial number of stories that illuminate lesser-known dimensions of India's struggle for independence. On this occasion, we are privileged to be joined by two living freedom fighters who stand before us as living embodiments of courage, sacrifice, and service - Shri Sheshrao Laxmanrao Khot of Maharashtra joined the Hyderabad Liberation Movement as a young student; and Shri Eddula Suryanarayana Reddy from Andhra Pradesh, who began supporting the freedom movement as a child and was detained by the police at the age of eleven years. Their presence reminds us that freedom is not a distant history but a living memory.

Virasat and Cultural Continuity

Complementing this is 11th edition of Virasat - that celebrates the cultural traditions, artistic expressions, and shared heritage that have fostered dialogue, diversity, and social cohesion across generations. It honours the memory of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay - freedom fighter, cultural visionary and institution-builder. The classical presentations draw upon musical traditions that have evolved through centuries of dialogue between generations, regions, and schools of thought. Indian classical music itself is a testament to the values of continuity, diversity, discipline, and creative freedom - values that are equally essential to a vibrant democracy.

The presentation Enajori: Loknaad - Janjatiya Samrasta ka Swar-Sangam

celebrates the rich cultural traditions of Assam and the North-East. Through its music and dance traditions representing diverse communities, it beautifully demonstrates the idea of unity in diversity, one of the foundational principles of our Republic. It reminds us that India's strength lies in its ability to accommodate multiple identities. Particularly meaningful is the special thematic presentation by the CCRT scholars, "From Silence to Voice, From Darkness to Dawn." Through the language of Indian classical music, it traces the journey from fear and suppression to courage, renewal, and democratic resurgence.

Another milestone in connection with the commemoration relates to the laying of the foundation stone for the Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati Kala Gurukul & Kalagram, which is designed to establish centres where India's artistic heritage can be studied and practiced. This is inspired from the age-old tradition of the Gurukul system. Just as democratic values must be passed from one generation to the next, cultural traditions too require institutions that sustain and renew them. In line with this principle, Seva Parv shows that cultural expressions still have an impact on people's consciousness and civic sense.

Taken together, the components associated with the commemoration of Samvidhan Hatya Diwas convey a common message. They remind us that democracy is not merely a political system; it is a living tradition. It is sustained by public participation, and protected by an informed and vigilant citizenry. As we move towards the centenary of Independence in 2047, let us carry forward this spirit with renewed commitment!

The author is Union Minister for Culture & Tourism, Government of India

Has The UK Become Ungovernable?

Starmer made some disastrous decisions and U-turns, but nothing significant enough to warrant ousting him

Mohamed Chebaro

The UK and its ruling Labour Party ought to have thought twice before rushing to push an unpopular prime minister to resign. Keir Starmer's large parliamentary majority and his government's early green shoots of progress did not protect a PM who was supposed to lead until 2029, as apparently he was becoming unpopular and his government lacked direction.

Britain is not unique, as charisma is increasingly preferred to competence and appeals to grassroots party supporters are seemingly more important than capabilities in office. This appears to be the fate of state and society post-Brexit, compounded by the shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and the costly Ukraine war. And 14 years of Conservative blunders and austerity have now left the UK ungovernable, it seems.

To be fair to Starmer, things were looking up. His government's immigration curbs have yielded a falling number of arrivals. The waiting lists in the National Health Service have been getting shorter. Even the economy has been showing early positive signs despite the US-Iran war and the trade and energy disruptions it caused.

On the international stage, the UK's posture has remained steadfast in its search for mature and responsible policies on Ukraine and the wars in the Middle East that are compliant with international law. That is despite this White House's policies, many of which have targeted traditional US allies such as London. Starmer has also overseen a rapprochement with the EU in terms of defense, security and the economy.

Starmer's record in office was overall less



than perfect, with some disastrous decisions and U-turns, but nothing significant enough to warrant ousting him. Even the saga concerning his choice of Peter Mandelson, who was badly tarnished by the Epstein files, as US ambassador and his party's performance at last month's local elections did not warrant his ousting. Nor did the fear that many in the Labour Party have been sensing as a result of the rise of Reform UK, led by the anti-immigrant, anti-EU, pro-Trump and pro-Putin Nigel Farage.

Yes, maybe Starmer failed in terms of charisma, popularity and political intrigues. And above all, he failed to inspire and give hope to the electorate. But one wonders if the UK is governable today, as the

traditional two-party system is giving way to a five-party system, with the public ever more impassioned and impatient, wanting a small state - yet a generous one - amid a shrinking national purse.

Replacing Starmer could be an easy task. Andy Burnham - the former mayor of Manchester dubbed the "King of the North" - could add presentation, inspiration and hope. But that will not necessarily translate into Labour unity, governance, growth or stability in a highly fractured country 10 years on from the fateful Brexit vote.

Against such a backdrop, Burnham might not be the solution, unless he comes with a clear program of reform and a government that can satisfy the electorate.

Burnham was born in Liverpool, where his father worked as a telephone engineer and his mother as a receptionist. He graduated from the University of Cambridge and took the familiar path to political prominence, first as a researcher and then adviser in parliament. He first served as a junior minister under Tony Blair, before becoming culture secretary and health secretary under Gordon Brown. He previously ran to become leader of the Labour Party in both 2010 and 2015 but failed both times.

Burnham's potential leadership will be put to the test early on, as the country and the markets closely watch his posture concerning three key issues. One is his level of commitment to fiscal discipline and balancing the books. Then it will be whether he can find the necessary spending increases for defense and trim the welfare bill within the Labour Party's fiscal rules.

His popularity while mayor of Manchester rested on his success in driving collaboration between the public and private sectors. The affairs of the central state are different and his biggest test may well be whether he again relies on the private sector or works to expand the state. In addition, his choice of chancellor will be telling and whether the markets will respond positively to his long-held belief that the nation needs to roll back 40 years of neoliberalism.

The UK was once seen as a pillar of political and economic stability, home to leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and Blair, whose combined 21 years in power helped reshape modern Britain.

Today, the country is gripped by the challenges posed by the populist far right, such as Reform and its nostalgic vision of Britain.

Burnham is a leader who could potentially stand up to the populists, but he is also someone looking to correct the years of Thatcherism.

The adversities facing the UK are colossal and its new leadership must have the ability to deal with the perennial problems of growing the economy while ensuring its compassion through funding the welfare state. The country is also seeking to position itself to capitalize on the technological possibilities associated with artificial intelligence amid a shifting world order and geostrategic landscape, in which the relationships between allies and foes are in constant flux.

Burnham, who is seeking to become Britain's seventh prime minister in a decade following his return to Parliament this week, must prove that he can occupy center stage, win over restless voters and overcome the economic constraints that hamstring his predecessors.

His pitch is that only he has the political charisma and the vision in Labour to connect with voters and defeat Reform, which has led in every poll for more than a year. But will that be enough?

A lot is being written about the UK and its failures, about why, increasingly, nothing seems to work, and who and how to fix it. But a small state and huge welfare spending are becoming unsustainable regardless of who occupies 10 Downing Street. Above all, whoever succeeds Starmer must find out if there is still a place for grown-up government.

Mohamed Chebaro is a British-Lebanese journalist with more than 25 years of experience covering war, terrorism, defense, current affairs and diplomacy. Courtesy: Arab News

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

Public welfare, inclusive development foremost priorities of Govt: Sakeena Itoo

Addresses mega public gathering at Aripal Tral

KT News Desk

PULWAMA, JUNE 25: Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, Thursday visited Aripal Tral and addressed a mega public gathering. The Minister was accompanied by Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), Chowdhary Mohammad Ramzan and MLA Hazratbal, Salman Sagar.

While interacting with the gathering, the Minister, as per an official statement, assured the people that the government remains committed towards addressing their genuine concerns and ensuring equitable development across all areas. She highlighted the administration's resolve to strengthen public service delivery and accelerate the developmental initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life of the people.

Speaking on the occasion, Sakeena Itoo highlighted various



initiatives being undertaken for the welfare and socio-economic upliftment of the people. She said that public welfare and inclusive development remain the foremost priorities of the government.

The Minister further emphasized that sustained efforts are being made to enhance

infrastructure and public facilities in key sectors including health, education, social welfare and other essential services. She urged the people to continue participating in the developmental process and maintain close coordination with the administration for effective grievance redressal.

During the event, individuals

and deputations from across the Tral area projected their demands and highlighted various developmental issues and public welfare concerns.

The Minister listened patiently to the issues raised by the people and assured them of the timely redressal of all genuine grievances.

Shaleen Kabra chairs UT-Level Committee Meeting on Groundwater Resource Assessment

Releases Key Groundwater Assessment Reports to Guide Sustainable Water Management in J&K

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 25: Additional Chief Secretary, Jal Shakti Department, Shaleen Kabra, Thursday chaired a meeting of the Union Territory Level Coordination Committee (UTLC) convened for assessment of groundwater resource potential in Jammu and Kashmir for the year 2026. Apart from senior officials of Central Government Water Board, the meeting was attended by Manoj Gupta, Secretary Technical, JSD, CEs PHE and Irrigation & Flood Control Departments and representatives of stakeholder departments.

The meeting, as per an official statement, organised by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) in pursuance of Government Order marked the commencement of the annual Groundwater Resource Assessment (GWRA-2026) exercise and reviewed ongoing groundwater management initiatives across the Union Territory.

During the meeting, detailed deliberations were held on groundwater resource assessment, inter-departmental coordination and data sharing, besides implementation of the National Aquifer Mapping and Management Programme (NAQUIM).

The Committee reviewed the roadmap for assessment of dynamic groundwater resources across 149 assessment units in Jammu and Kashmir and stressed the need for timely sharing, validation and integration of data by all stakeholder departments to ensure accurate and scientific assessment.

On the occasion, the Additional Chief Secretary released two significant publications of the Central Ground Water Board including the National Compilation on Dynamic Ground Water Resources of India - 2025; and Dynamic Ground Water Resources of Jammu & Kashmir - 2025.

These publications provide an updated assessment of groundwater availability,

extraction and sustainability parameters, and are expected to serve as valuable reference documents for evidence-based planning, groundwater conservation and sustainable management of water resources in the Union Territory.

The meeting also reviewed the findings of aquifer management studies conducted in parts of Kathua district. Discussions were held on the proposed NAQUIM studies in the Jammu Urban Agglomeration and selected areas of Anantnag and Rajouri districts, aimed at enhancing scientific understanding of groundwater systems and strengthening conservation and management strategies.

Addressing the meeting, the ACS underscored the critical importance of scientific groundwater assessment, coordinated inter-departmental efforts and adoption of sustainable groundwater management practices to safeguard the Union Territory's water resources and ensure long-term water security for future generations.

DIG, DC review, finalise Amarnath Yatra 2026 arrangements in Udhampur



KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, JUNE 25: DIG Udhampur-Reasi Range Shiv Kumar and Deputy Commissioner Udhampur Minga Sherpa Thursday chaired a meeting of officers from various line departments to review and finalise preparedness for Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra 2026 across the district.

The meeting, as per an official statement, covered arrangements along the Yatra route from Tikri to Chenani, including security, safe drinking water, power supply, health-care and emergency medical services, sanitation, lodging centres, temporary toilets, langar arrangements and traffic management.

JPDC officers were directed to ensure uninterrupted power supply along the route; the Jal Shakti Department to deploy

water tankers round the clock; the Assistant Commissioner of Police to establish sanitary complexes and toilet facilities well in advance; the Traffic Department to ensure smooth vehicular movement throughout the Yatra; Chief Executive Officer Municipal Council Udhampur to install adequate dustbins and deploy vehicles for scientific disposal of waste at langar sites and lodging centres; and the Chief Medical Officer to ensure round-the-clock medical facilities, adequate healthcare personnel and prompt emergency response services.

Among those present were Senior Superintendent of Police Amritpal Singh, Additional Deputy Commissioner Prem Singh, Assistant Commissioner Revenue Dr Umesh Shan and senior officers from the civil administration, police and other security agencies.

DE&CC Bandipora organizes 1-Day Job Fair

Over 450 unemployed youth participate

KT News Desk

BANDIPORA, JUNE 25 : District Employment & Counselling Centre (DE&CC), Bandipora, on Thursday organized a one-day Job Fair at the Employment Office premises under the theme "One Platform for Employment and Entrepreneurship."

The event aimed to bridge the gap between job seekers and employers by providing a common platform for employment opportunities and career advancement.

The Job Fair, as per an official statement, witnessed an overwhelming response from the youth of the district, with more than 450 unemployed candidates from different areas participating enthusiastically in the event. Around 15 reputed companies and private-sector employers representing diverse industries took part in the recruitment drive, offering employment opportunities across various sectors.

During the course of the event, 450 candidates submitted their applications for different job profiles. Following preliminary screening and interaction sessions, 140 candidates were shortlisted for the next stage of the selection process, while six candidates secured on-the-spot placements, marking a significant achievement of the recruitment drive.

To further strengthen



employment and entrepreneurship initiatives, a dedicated Mission YUVA Facilitation Stall was established by the Block Handholding and Development (BHD) team. The stall provided guidance and registration support to aspiring entrepreneurs and unemployed youth under various Mission YUVA schemes. Participants were sensitized about livelihood generation opportunities, skill development programmes, self-employment initiatives, financial assistance schemes, and other socio-economic empowerment programmes aimed at promoting sustainable entrepreneurship and employment.

Assistant Director Employment, Bandipora, Akil Khateeb, appreciated the active participation of the youth, employers, and all stakeholders. He expressed gratitude to the participating companies, officials, and organizing teams for their collective efforts in making the Job Fair a grand success and reaffirmed the department's resolve to continue organizing such initiatives for the

welfare and empowerment of the youth.

Speaking on the occasion, the Career Counselling Officer, DE&CC Bandipora, encouraged the participants to register themselves on the J&K Employment Portal, which has been integrated with the National Career Service (NCS) Portal. He highlighted that the platform offers a wide range of free services, including online career counselling, video resume creation, skill enhancement programmes, job-matching services, and timely notifications regarding employment opportunities in both the public and private sectors across the country.

The officer also emphasized the importance of continuous skill development and urged the youth to take advantage of the various employment-oriented schemes and services being provided by the Employment Department. He reiterated the department's commitment to supporting unemployed youth by connecting them with relevant opportunities and enhancing their employability.

NMJKA: DIPR's Cultural Unit organises programme at HSS Barbugh Imam Sahib Shopian



KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, JUNE 25: The Cultural Unit of the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Kashmir, Thursday organised a vibrant awareness programme under the Nasha Mukta Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan (NMJKA) at Government Higher Secondary School (HSS) Barbugh Imam Sahib, Shopian.

The day-long programme, as per an official statement, witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, teachers, parents, and artists. Student speakers highlighted the devastating consequences of substance abuse and underscored the need for adopting a healthy, responsible, and drug-free lifestyle.

Adding a cultural dimension to the awareness campaign, artists of the Yadgar Cultural Group presented a thought-provoking skit portraying the harmful effects of drug abuse on individuals, families, and society. The performance received appreciation from the audience for its impactful message.

Addressing the gathering, Cultural Officer Kashmir, Abdul Raqeeb Bhat, urged students

and youth to pursue modern and emerging fields of education and remain actively engaged in constructive activities that contribute to nation-building.

Speaking on the occasion, AECO, Cultural Unit, Syed Shakeel Shan stressed the importance of moral education, cultural activities, and artistic engagement in curbing the growing drug menace and other challenges threatening the social fabric of society.

Principal Mushtaq Ahmad and Lecturer Showkat Ahmad expressed gratitude to the Department of Information and Public Relations for conducting such meaningful awareness programmes in every nook and corner of the district and for sensitising the younger generation about the dangers of substance abuse.

During the concluding session, students and artists were felicitated for their active participation and valuable contributions to the programme.

The event concluded with a renewed commitment from all stakeholders to work collectively towards building a drug-free, healthy, and progressive society.

SKUAST-K ranks 4th in IIRF University Rankings 2026

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JUNE 25: Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) has been awarded 4th rank nationally (Agriculture & Horticulture University category) in the International Institutional Ranking Framework (IIRF) University Rankings 2026, reinforcing its growing stature as one of India's leading institutions in agricultural education and research.

Ranked just behind three of the country's most prestigious agricultural universities, ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi; Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana; and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, SKUAST-K's achievement reflects its remarkable rise as a leading center of excellence in agricultural education, research, innovation, and rural transformation.

The recognition, as per an official statement places SKUAST-K among the country's top agricultural universities

and reflects its expanding academic, research, and innovation footprint. The ranking is based on IIRF's comprehensive evaluation of over 2,500 institutions nationwide, using key performance indicators such as academic reputation, student diversity, research outcomes, innovation, infrastructure, community engagement, and international outlook.

SKUAST-K registered a strong performance across multiple ranking indicators, including academic excellence, research, innovation, inclusivity, community engagement, infrastructure, and global outreach. The university currently offers 14 undergraduate programs, the highest among state agricultural universities in the country, and has nearly 30 percent of its students from outside Jammu and Kashmir.

In research and innovation, SKUAST-K's IPR tally stands at 123 IPRs, including 117 in the last four years, holds an H-index of 115, and has over 200 extramural research projects in operation. The university has also strengthened its profile

through large-scale community engagement and development initiatives, such as the Student Rural Exploration Program, which covers 400 villages, involves about 4,000 students, and is expanding its national and international collaborations with reputable institutions and industries.

Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-K, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai, said the achievement reflects the sustained efforts of the university's faculty, scientists, students, and staff. He said SKUAST-K remains committed to strengthening research, promoting innovation, and supporting farming communities through education, community engagement, and technology transfer. Prof. Ganai said the university has repositioned its strategic focus from local to national in 2022 and from national to global in 2026, with the aim of emerging as a globally reputed institution in transdisciplinary sciences.

The achievement further strengthens SKUAST-K's position as a center of excellence in agricultural sciences, innovation, and rural transformation.

CRC Jammu conducts RCI-Accredited CRE Programme in Baramulla

KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, JUNE 25: The Composite Regional Centre (CRC) for Skill Development, Rehabilitation and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Jammu, successfully organized a Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) Accredited Continuing Rehabilitation Education (CRE) Programme in the Aspirational District of Baramulla under the National Fund for Conducting Rehabilitation Education (CRE) Programmes.

The State-level CRE Programme, as per an official statement, was organized on the theme "Recent Developments in Prevention, Diagnosis and Management of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities" and witnessed enthusiastic participation from more than 150 rehabilitation professionals, special educators, therapists, academicians, and stakeholders from across the region.

The programme was attended by Nasir Ahmed, Chief Planning Officer, Baramulla; Dr. Rohnika Sharma, Director, CRC Jammu; Naveen Gupta, Administrative



Officer, CRC Jammu; Rahul Singh, Rehabilitation Officer, CRC Jammu; and Dr. Rayees Zahoor Shah, CRE Coordinator and Developmental Therapist, CRC Jammu.

Addressing the gathering as the Chief Guest, the Chief Planning Officer, appreciated the efforts of CRC Jammu in bringing quality professional training programmes to aspirational districts and underscored the importance of collaborative efforts in ensuring inclusive development and better rehabilitation outcomes for persons with disabilities.

Director, CRC Jammu, emphasized the importance of

of rehabilitation.

During the technical sessions, valuable insights on contemporary practices and emerging developments in the management of intellectual and developmental disabilities were highlighted. Experienced rehabilitation professionals and subject experts, while speaking on the occasion, covered various aspects related to the prevention, diagnosis, assessment, intervention, and management of intellectual and developmental disabilities. The sessions provided participants with evidence-based knowledge, practical strategies, and updates on recent developments in the field.

Certificates were distributed to all participants and resource persons in recognition of their active participation and contribution. The CRE Programme served as an important platform for knowledge sharing, professional networking, and strengthening rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities, reflecting CRC Jammu's continued commitment towards excellence in rehabilitation education and capacity building.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Amarnath Yatra

that the true purpose of religion is to unite people and strengthen the bonds of humanity," he observed.

LG Sinha said that the pilgrimage celebrates India's diversity, bringing together devotees from different regions, languages and traditions. Their interaction during the journey fosters understanding, respect and cultural exchange, making the Yatra a vibrant reflection of the country's "unity in diversity".

The Lieutenant Governor underlined the economic significance of the pilgrimage, stating that thousands of families across Jammu and Kashmir depend directly or indirectly on the annual Yatra for their livelihoods. Pony operators, transporters, hoteliers, shopkeepers, artisans and service providers benefit from the influx of pilgrims, making the Yatra an important driver of regional economic growth.

The Lieutenant Governor stressed the need to balance development with environmental protection. He said the administration remains committed to organising an eco-friendly and zero-waste pilgrimage through initiatives focused on waste management, recycling, biodiversity conservation and animal welfare.

He highlighted campaigns promoting responsible tourism, including structured waste collection systems, recycling drives and public awareness programmes aimed at reducing plastic waste along the pilgrimage routes.

Reviewing recent infrastructure upgrades, Sinha said considerable improvements have been made over the past few years to ensure the safety and comfort of pilgrims. Both the Baltal and Chandanwari routes have been widened to 12 feet, equipped with lighting facilities and strengthened through regular maintenance. Ambulances and emergency services have also been positioned at strategic locations along the tracks.

The Lieutenant Governor said modern technology has transformed the management of the Yatra without compromising its spiritual essence. Facilities such as online registration, RFID and GPS-based tracking systems, CCTV surveillance, digital information platforms and advanced communication networks have significantly enhanced safety, transparency and accessibility for pilgrims.

Looking ahead, LG Sinha expressed confidence that Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra would emerge as a globally recognised destination for spiritual tourism. He said the pilgrimage offers international visitors an opportunity to experience India's rich traditions of spirituality, meditation, yoga and philosophy, while also serving as an effective medium of cultural diplomacy.

"Pilgrims who visit Jammu and Kashmir become ambassadors of the region's culture, hospitality and spiritual heritage. The Yatra has the potential to showcase the true essence of Kashmir and India to the world," he said.

Among those present on the occasion were Dr. Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor and CEO of Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board; Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Commissioner Secretary, Youth Services and Sports Department; Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; V.K. Birdi, IGP Kashmir; Javid Iqbal Matoo, DIG South Kashmir; Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, Deputy Commissioner Anantnag; Amod Nagpure Ashok, SSP Anantnag; Dr. Khalida Hassan, Principal of Government Degree College for Women, Anantnag, along with faculty members, students, civil society representatives and prominent citizens. (KNO)

Ensure seamless

on-ground preparations and directed all concerned departments to ensure seamless arrangements, foolproof security and a comfortable experience for pilgrims.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, LG Sinha said that the Jammu and Kashmir administration, security forces and various government agencies have been working in close coordination to make the pilgrimage safe, secure and hassle-free for devotees arriving from different parts of the country.

"We reviewed all arrangements related to security, accommodation, healthcare, sanitation, transportation, communication facilities, power and water supply, and other essential services. I am satisfied with the preparations made so far. Extensive measures have been taken to facilitate the smooth movement and stay of pilgrims," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasized that all departments and agencies are functioning in a coordinated manner to ensure efficient management of every aspect of the Yatra. He said special focus has been laid on security, emergency response systems, medical assistance and public convenience facilities to ensure the well-being of pilgrims throughout their journey.

LG Sinha assured devotees that comprehensive arrangements have been made and urged them to undertake the pilgrimage with confidence. "The administration and security agencies have put all necessary mechanisms in place to ensure a safe and secure Yatra. Every effort is being made to provide pilgrims with a comfortable and spiritually enriching experience," he said.

Highlighting the role of local residents, the Lieutenant Governor said the people of Kashmir have always been known for their hospitality and warmth towards visitors. He added that local communities are fully prepared to welcome the pilgrims and would extend wholehearted support during the annual religious event.

"The people of Kashmir are ready to receive devotees with open arms and contribute towards making their journey memorable. Their cooperation and hospitality have always been an integral part of the Yatra's success," he said.

During the review meeting, senior officials briefed the Lieutenant Governor on the status of various developmental and logistical works being carried out ahead of the pilgrimage. They informed him that preparations are progressing as per schedule and that all departments remain committed to ensuring seamless

arrangements along the Yatra route.

The 57-day Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra is scheduled to commence on July 3 and conclude on August 28 amid enhanced security measures and elaborate arrangements for pilgrims. Officials expressed confidence that the coordinated efforts of the administration, security agencies and local stakeholders would ensure the successful conduct of this year's pilgrimage.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Mandeep K Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor and CEO Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board; Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Commissioner Secretary, Youth Services and Sports Department and Nodal Officer for Pahalgam Axis; Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; VK Birdi, IGP Kashmir; M. Suleman Choudhary, IGP Traffic J&K; Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag; Shri Amod Nagpure Ashok, SSP Anantnag and senior officers of civil administration, police and security forces.

The Lieutenant Governor held a comprehensive review of all key sectors, including logistics, lodging, healthcare facilities, sanitation, power and water supply, availability of civic amenities, road connectivity, RFID cards, functioning on joint control rooms, track maintenance and widening works, construction of footbridges, setting up of langars, creation of holding areas, traffic management and security arrangements.

To ensure safety, weather-based evacuation protocols must be established alongside the strategic deployment of Mountain Response Teams (MRTs) at critical intervals. Furthermore, all transit tents must pass rigorous quality inspections and be equipped with functional fire extinguishers.

On the tracks, real-time crowd analysis must be utilized to identify and clear choke points, while robust traffic management plans and designated parking zones must be enforced to prevent congestion and guarantee the uninterrupted transportation of essential supplies," the Lieutenant Governor directed the officials.

He instructed all concerned departments and agencies to ensure synergy and close coordination for timely completion of works and better delivery of services.

He directed the BRO to complete all the allotted works before the Yatra.

The Lieutenant Governor directed officials to conduct regular work monitoring and on-ground inspections to resolve gaps immediately.

Additionally, he emphasized that transit camps and halt points must have trained manpower, along with reliable water and power supplies, to ensure the convenience of both pilgrims and service providers.

Deputy Commissioner Anantnag briefed the meeting on the overall preparations being made for the smooth and hassle-free conduct of the annual pilgrimage.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Anantnag, delivered a detailed presentation on the multi-layered security framework and the comprehensive measures in place to ensure pilgrim safety along the entire route.

VISITS NUNWAN BASE CAMP, REVIEWS ON-GROUND ARRANGEMENTS

LG Sinha also visited the Nunwan base camp with senior officials and reviewed the on-ground arrangements for Amarnath Yatra-2026.

The Lieutenant Governor conducted a detailed inspection and took stock of all amenities in place to ensure a smooth, comfortable, and welcoming experience for the devotees of Baba Barfani.

The Lieutenant Governor inspected the accommodation blocks, and other infrastructure at the camp. He directed the concerned officers to expedite pending works at a few remaining blocks, emphasizing that timely completion must be achieved without compromising on high quality standards, pilgrim safety, comfort and convenience.

The Lieutenant Governor was accompanied by the senior officials of the Police and civil administration. (KNO)

Police launch 'Hawk

suspicious activity.

MOCK DRILLS

Meanwhile, security forces conducted a series of mock drills and preparedness exercises across Jammu and Kashmir to test response capabilities ahead of the pilgrimage.

In Bandipora, police, CRPF, SSB and Army personnel carried out a joint mock drill at Shadipora Camp focusing on convoy protection, emergency evacuation, rapid response operations and coordinated action during crisis situations.

A similar high-intensity exercise was held by Ganderbal Police at Malshahi Bagh, Sonamarg Z-Morh Tunnel and along the national highway in Gund with the participation of the Army, CAPFs, SDRF, Fire and Emergency Services, Health Department and civil administration.

In Udhampur, multiple security agencies conducted a mock drill at Birmah Bridge on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway to assess preparedness against potential terror threats and strengthen emergency response coordination.

Police Awantipora, along with the Railway Protection Force, Government Railway Police, Army, Fire and Emergency Services and Health Department, organised a joint exercise at Panzgam railway station to evaluate standard operating procedures and inter-agency response during emergencies.

In Jammu district, police, assisted by the BSF and CISF, conducted cordon-and-search operations in the RS Pura border belt as part of heightened security measures ahead of the yatra. Searches were carried out at identified locations in Chakroi and Baspur Bangla areas, but no suspicious material was recovered, officials said.

Officials said the security arrangements were being continuously reviewed to ensure a secure environment for pilgrims and the smooth conduct of the annual pilgrimage. (KNO)

Maintain tight

Observer (KNO) was attended by senior officers of the Army, CRPF, BSF, SSB and ITBP. Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs) from Srinagar, Budgam, Bandipora and Ganderbal. They briefed the DGP on deployment plans, route domination, surveillance arrangements, emergency response mechanisms and inter-agency coordination measures.

Reviewing the overall security scenario, the DGP Prabhat directed all security agencies to maintain round-the-clock vigilance, strengthen intelligence sharing and ensure seamless coordination at every level.

He stressed that all agencies must remain on high alert to facilitate the peaceful, secure and incident-free conduct of the Yatra while sustaining the momentum of ongoing counter-terror operations across the Valley.

The DGP reiterated that robust security arrangements, effective intelligence coordination and close cooperation among all stakeholders remain essential for safeguarding the annual pilgrimage and maintaining peace and stability across Kashmir.

DGP Prabhat directed all security agencies to maintain round-the-clock vigilance, strengthen intelligence-sharing networks and ensure seamless coordination at every level to facilitate the safe and incident-free conduct of the pilgrimage. (KNO)

LG highlights life,

his deepest prayers for the peace, well-being, and prosperity of all. He said the vision of great sages reminds us that our collective growth and harmony are beautifully interconnected.

"The life and teachings of Shivacharya Abhinavagupta, foremost exponent of Kashmir Shaivism, continue to illuminate India's spiritual heritage. From aesthetics to profound philosophy of Self-recognition, his vision remains a timeless beacon of non-dual consciousness," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The members of Shri Anandishwar Bhairav Nath Asthan Trust's Organizing and Management Committees including Omkar Nath Bhat, President; Hari Krishan Koul, Vice President; Hira Lal Koul, Executive Member; Pushpati Nath Koul, Joint Secretary, and Vijay Sas, Secretary were present.

VK Birdi, IGP Kashmir; Tejinder Singh, IGP CID; Dr. GV Sundeep Chakravarthy, SSP Srinagar; Akshay Labroo, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar and senior officers also accompanied the Lieutenant Governor.

Gulmarg Gondola

led the mid-air rescue, besides regularisation of six cable car workers.

The Chief Minister formally flagged off the service at Gulmarg and said the government ensured that all repairs and maintenance procedures were vetted and certified by the original equipment manufacturer, POMA, before allowing operations to resume.

Speaking to reporters, CM Omar, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said an interim report submitted by the inquiry committee formed after the May 25 incident was examined by the company, which subsequently inspected the repairs and maintenance work carried out by the Jammu and Kashmir Cable Car Corporation.

"Only after the company was satisfied and certified the service and maintenance procedures did we decide to restart the gondola," he said.

Abdullah said the faulty gearbox responsible for the disruption had been replaced within four to five days of the incident by the Cable Car Corporation, but the government deliberately refrained from rushing the reopening process.

"If we wanted, the Gondola could have been restarted on the fifth day itself. But we decided there would be no haste. Passenger safety was the priority, and the service was resumed only after all clearances were obtained," he said.

The Gondola has remained non-operational since May 25, when a technical snag halted services and left more than 300 tourists stranded in cabins suspended above the ground. The incident triggered panic among visitors and led to a large-scale rescue operation involving technical teams and emergency responders. The evacuation process continued for several hours before all passengers were safely brought to the ground.

Recalling the incident, the Chief Minister said local rescuers and Gondola employees played a crucial role in evacuating stranded passengers before security and disaster response agencies completed the operation.

"Nearly 52 cabins were hanging on the cable, and more than 40 of them were evacuated by local volunteers and rescuers. The people who did the real work did not get the recognition they deserved. Today, I thanked them," he said.

In recognition of their efforts, the CM announced a cash reward of Rs 50,000 each for employees of the Gulmarg Gondola Project who participated in the rescue operation. He described the reward as a token of appreciation for their commitment and courage during the emergency.

He also announced the regularisation of six cable car employees who were part of the rescue effort and said additional workers would be regularised in a phased manner.

Omar expressed satisfaction over the resilience of the tourism sector during the month-long suspension, saying fears that Gulmarg would witness a sharp decline in visitors did not materialise.

"We were worried that Gulmarg might become empty after the gondola was shut. That did not happen. Tourists continued to visit, and tourism activities carried on. With the reopening of the gondola, we expect tourist arrivals to increase further," he said.

The Chief Minister also took a Gondola ride to Phase I at Kongdoori, where he personally inspected the system and reviewed the extensive restoration works undertaken following a recent technical malfunction.

During the visit, officials from the J&K Cable

Car Corporation briefed the CM on the technical specifics of the restoration and the stringent safety audits conducted before clearing the service for public use.

Expressing his appreciation for the dedication of the entire corporation staff, Abdullah applauded their round-the-clock efforts in restoring this vital infrastructure project—one of the country's premier tourist attractions—within a remarkably short span of time.

During the visit, the Chief Minister was accompanied by Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Gulmarg Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah, Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Senior Superintendent of Police Baramulla, Managing Director of the J&K Cable Car Corporation Syed Qamar Sajad, the CEO of the Gulmarg Development Authority, and other senior officers. (KNO)

Safety, not revenue

after all mandatory technical inspections, repairs and trial runs were completed successfully.

"After the necessary tests and checks, the Gondola has been reopened for tourists and flagged off by the Chief Minister. It is a happy moment because one of the major assets of Kashmir tourism has resumed operations. The Gondola plays a vital role in promoting tourism across Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

The Director said that authorities deliberately refrained from rushing the reopening process despite the importance of the Gondola to the tourism sector. "If you think revenue is our concern, then no, it is not. Our concern has always been the safety and security of tourists. That is why the service was reopened only after all mandatory tests and safety checks were completed," he said.

The Director Tourism acknowledged that technical failures can occur in any mechanical system but said the expertise of the Cable Car Corporation's technical staff gives confidence in the system's operation and maintenance.

"Technical faults cannot be ruled out. However, the Cable Car team, especially the mechanical team, is competent enough to manage the Gondola properly. We have full faith in their capabilities and in future also we will take due care to ensure smooth and safe operations," he said.

Pertinently, the Gulmarg Gondola had remained shut since May 25 after a technical snag disrupted operations, leaving more than 300 tourists stranded in around 65 cabins. The incident triggered a massive rescue operation involving local volunteers. Gondola staff, the Army, police and disaster response teams, all of whom worked for hours to safely evacuate passengers.

Following the incident, authorities carried out extensive repairs, replaced the faulty gearbox, conducted technical audits and undertook multiple trial runs before restoring services.

The Jammu and Kashmir Government also constituted a high-level committee to investigate the circumstances leading to the malfunction and recommend measures to strengthen operational safety. (KNO)

LG thanks Gadkari

benefit Shri Amarnath Ji pilgrims and ensure smooth movement of passengers and freight," the Lieutenant Governor said.

LG, CM recall

a peaceful, progressive, and equitable society."

CM OMAR PAYS TRIBUTE

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also paid rich tributes to Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) and the martyrs of Karbala, recalling their unparalleled sacrifice for truth, justice and righteousness.

In his message on the solemn occasion of Ashoora, the Chief Minister said that the tragedy of Karbala remains an eternal symbol of courage, steadfastness and resistance against tyranny. He observed that Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS), along with his devoted family members and companions, upheld the highest ideals of faith, justice, compassion and human dignity through their supreme sacrifice.

"The message of Karbala transcends time and geography. It inspires humanity to stand firm in the face of injustice, uphold moral values and safeguard the principles of truth and righteousness, irrespective of the challenges," the Chief Minister said.

CM Omar Abdullah emphasized that the teachings and sacrifice of Imam Hussain (AS) continue to serve as a beacon of hope and guidance for people across the world, reminding society of the importance of selflessness, integrity and unwavering commitment to justice.

The Chief Minister urged people to imbibe the timeless values exemplified by the martyrs of Karbala and work collectively towards fostering peace, harmony, mutual respect and brotherhood in society.

On the occasion, Omar Abdullah joined the people in solemn observance of Ashoora and prayed for lasting peace, communal harmony and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir.

He also prayed for eternal peace to the revered martyrs of Karbala and for the well-being of all. (KNO)

Max speed on

safeguarding railway property. (KNO)

Gol clears J&K's

Governor said.

The approved NCOE is envisioned as a premier national centre for High Altitude Sports and various athletic competitions, while also serving as a major platform for skilling thousands of local youths in multiple sporting disciplines. The Centre is expected to significantly strengthen the sports-development architecture of the Union Territory by integrating training, talent identification, sports science, performance enhancement, rehabilitation, residential facilities, and competition infrastructure within one advanced campus.

The NCOE campus will include athletics

tracks, indoor courts, football turf, hockey turfs, kabaddi and kho-kho courts, shooting range, swimming pool, taekwondo hall, sports skilling centres, integrated strength & conditioning and rehabilitation complex, hostels, sports science centre, and sports medicine centre. Together, these facilities will create a high-performance ecosystem capable of nurturing talent from the grassroots to the elite level.

The establishment of the NCOE is expected to put Jammu & Kashmir leaps and bounds ahead in its capacity to produce athletes of national and international standing. For the first time, the Union Territory will have access to an integrated, national-standard institutional platform where promising athletes can train under scientific conditions with the support of modern infrastructure, recovery systems, residential facilities, and specialized performance services. This will not only enhance sporting outcomes but also reduce the distance between local talent and elite opportunity.

The Centre is particularly significant for Jammu & Kashmir because of its strategic suitability for high altitude training, a proven advantage in building endurance, stamina, and competitive performance across several disciplines. Once established, the NCOE will enable athletes from J&K and beyond to train in an environment ideally suited for long-term athletic development, while also creating opportunities for the region to host training camps, coaching programmes, national-level competitions, and performance-based sports initiatives.

The project is also expected to have a far-reaching developmental impact beyond competitive sports. By creating a robust institutional structure for sports training and youth engagement, the NCOE will help generate a stronger culture of discipline, aspiration, and achievement among young people. It will open pathways for local youth not only as athletes, but also as coaches, trainers, technical officials, physiotherapists, sports science professionals, fitness experts, and support personnel. In this manner, the Centre will serve both as a high-performance sports institution and as a long-term engine of youth empowerment, skilling, and social development.

The NCOE has already undergone preliminary feasibility assessment, which has found the location suitable for development of a major sports training facility. The availability of a large tract of government land at the site gives the project the scale and flexibility needed for a national-standard integrated campus of international standards.

The establishment of the Centre reflects the sustained efforts of the Jammu & Kashmir administration to secure high-impact sports infrastructure for the Union Territory. The proposal for the NCOE was submitted by the Department in April 2026 Chintan Shivir held at SKICC Srinagar and was taken forward under the guidance of Chief Secretary Shri Atal Dulloo, who heads the Apex Committee for Centrally Sponsored Schemes, with the proposal being led by Commissioner Secretary, Youth Services & Sports, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary.

For coordinated facilitation of the next stages of the project, including inspections, inter-departmental coordination, surveys, and DPR-related processes, Shri Anshul Garg, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, will be the Nodal Officer.

The sanction of the first NCOE for Jammu & Kashmir is being seen as a defining milestone in the Union Territory's sporting journey. With this national-level institution set to come up in Kashmir, J&K is poised to emerge as a strong centre of excellence in sports, capable of producing the next generation of Olympic, international, and national champions.

CM Omar chairs

progress of ongoing conservation initiatives and deliberate on policy, administrative and infrastructure-related matters concerning the Dal, Nigeen, Khushalsar and Gilsar lakes.

The meeting was attended by Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary Finance Shailendra Kumar, Commissioner Secretary Forests, Environment and Ecology Sheetal Nanda, Commissioner Secretary Housing and Urban Development Mandeep Kaur and other senior officers.

The Board reviewed the action taken on decisions of its previous meeting and assessed the progress of major conservation and restoration initiatives, including the Integrated Management Plan for the Dal-Nigeen lake ecosystem, eco-development of lake hamlets, sewerage infrastructure, lake cleaning operations and other measures aimed at improving the ecological health of the lakes.

Emphasizing that conservation of Jammu and Kashmir's lakes requires sustained institutional coordination, scientific planning and timely execution, the Chief Minister directed the concerned departments and the Authority to expedite ongoing projects while ensuring strict compliance with environmental safeguards and statutory procedures.

The meeting held detailed deliberations on agenda items relating to strengthening the Authority, modernization of sewerage management systems, conservation of Khushalsar and Gilsar lakes, and enhancement of institutional capacity. The Chief Minister directed that proposals requiring further examination and refinement be revised and resubmitted after incorporating the observations made during the deliberations.

Reaffirming the Government's commitment to preserving the fragile lake ecosystem, the Chief Minister stressed that conservation efforts must be guided by scientific assessment, environmental sustainability and long-term public interest.

He also called for regular monitoring of ongoing works and close inter-departmental coordination to ensure tangible improvements in the conservation and management of Jammu and Kashmir's lakes.

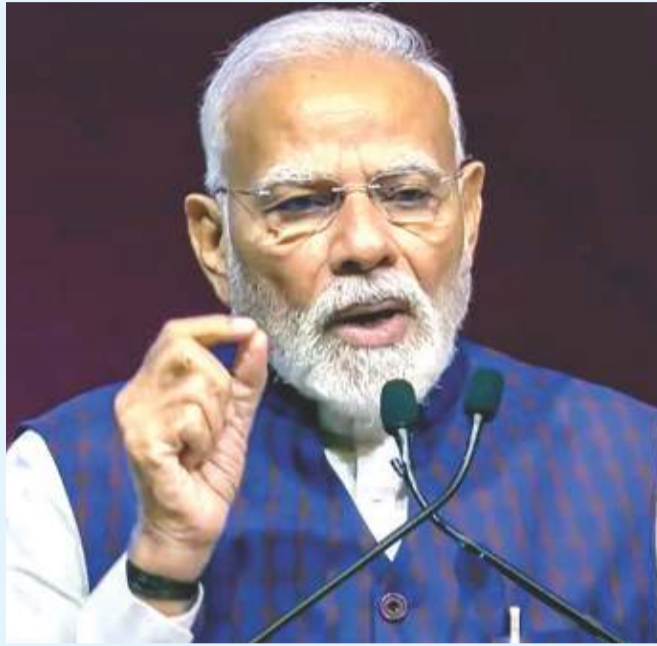
Emergency dark period which saw Indian democracy brutally crushed: PM

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said Emergency was a direct assault on the Constitution as the period witnessed the suspension of civil liberties, curbs on freedom of expression, and an assault on institutions that are the bedrock of Indian democracy.

Paying homage to all those who steadfastly defended democratic values during one of the "darkest chapters in India's history", Modi said Emergency also revealed the extraordinary courage of countless citizens who refused to remain silent and upheld the ideals enshrined in the Constitution.

"The Emergency was a direct assault on our Constitution. It witnessed the suspension of civil liberties, curbs on freedom of expression, arrests of political leaders, journalists, social workers and an assault on institutions that are the bedrock of our democracy," he said in a post on X referring to the proclamation of Emergency on this day in 1975. The prime minister said for people, the Constitution is an embodiment of the aspirations, rights and duties of 140 crore Indians. "We reaffirm our



collective commitment to safeguarding constitutional values. Guided by the spirit of our Constitution, we will build an India that remains ever committed to justice, liberty, equality and fraternity," he said. Between June 25, 1975 and March 21, 1977, India was placed under a state of Emergency under Article 352 of the Constitution. Since 2025, the

Narendra Modi government is observing the day as 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas'. A gazette notification in this effect had noted that Emergency was declared on June 25, 1975, following which there was "gross abuse of power by the government of the day and people of India were subjected to excesses and atrocities".

In another post on X, the

prime minister said the 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' also reminds every one of that "dark period" when "Indian democracy was brutally crushed".

"It inspires us to always remain committed to protecting democracy, the Constitution, and citizens' rights. My respectful salutations to all the luminaries who opposed the Emergency," he said in the post in Hindi.

The formal declaration of Emergency marked a turning point in Indian constitutional history. The executive acquired overriding powers, and state authority was brought under central control. Following the proclamation, constitutional safeguards were systematically suspended.

The Emergency saw strict control over the press and public information through institutional mechanisms and administrative orders.

Parliament passed a series of constitutional amendments during the Emergency that weakened judicial review and institutional checks. One of the most controversial aspects of the Emergency was the forced sterilisation campaign. The Emergency came to a formal end in March 1977, following a political shift triggered by general elections.

Emergency a dark chapter in India's history: Shah



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 25: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday described the Emergency, imposed by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, a "dark chapter" in India's history and accused the Congress of attempting to "crush the soul of the Constitution." In a message posted on 'X' on the occasion of 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas', observed by the Modi Government, Shah said June 25, 1975, marked a dark phase in Indian democracy. "The day is that dark chapter in the history of Indian democracy, when the arrogance and greed for power of Indira Gandhi and the

Congress Party attempted to crush the soul of the Constitution, the freedom of the press, and the right to expression," he said. On the occasion, Shah paid tribute to those who opposed the Emergency.

"On the occasion of Constitution Murder Day, I pay my respectful homage to all those warriors of democracy who fought against the Emergency to protect democratic values," he said. Shah said, "The purpose of the Modi Government observing 25 June as 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' is to keep this dark chapter alive in the nation's memory and to ensure that the Congress Party can never again inflict such an assault on democracy and the Constitution in the future."

Amazon CEO Andy Jassy meets PM Modi

Announces plans to invest \$48 billion in India



PTI

New Delhi, Jun 25: Amazon CEO Andy Jassy met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday and outlined the e-commerce company's plans to invest an additional USD 13 billion in India to expand AI and cloud infrastructure by 2030. Jassy underlined the company's

long-term commitment to India. The fresh investment line-up will take Amazon's total capital infusion in the country to USD 48 billion between 2026 and 2030.

"Amazon CEO Andy Jassy met Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier today in New Delhi. Jassy reiterated Amazon's long-term

commitment to India and announced plans to invest an additional USD 13 billion to expand AI and cloud infrastructure in the country by 2030," Amazon said in a statement.

This takes Amazon's total planned investment in expanding and supporting AI and cloud infrastructure to over USD 21 billion between 2026 and 2030, establishing it as one of the largest global AI and cloud infrastructure investors in the country.

"The investment will expand AWS (Amazon Web Services) data centre capacity in Mumbai and Hyderabad, giving startups, enterprises and government organisations access to custom AI chips, managed AI services, secure and reliable cloud technologies and developer tools to innovate faster, scale rapidly, and serve customers globally," Amazon added.

With this, Amazon's cumulative investments in India from 2010 to 2030 stand at over USD 88 billion.

Sharad Pawar dismisses claim about imminent defection of party MPs

PTI

Pune, Jun 25: NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar and the party's working president Supriya Sule on Thursday asserted that no MP from their party would defect to the rival faction.

They were responding to NCP MLA Dharmarao Atram's

claim that five of the eight MPs of Sharad Pawar's party were ready to cross over to the Nationalist Congress Party led by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar by December.

"Not a single MP or MLA will defect," Sharad Pawar told reporters.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER POSHAN PROJECT ZAINGEER ADVERTISEMENT NOTICE

Applications on prescribed proforma (Annexure-I) are hereby invited from the eligible female candidates of the Panch wards/Municipal Wards shown against the below mentioned Panchayat Halqas /Municipal Wards, for the engagement of Sahayikas (AWHs) "preferably married" for the Anganwadi Centres of POSHAN Project ZAINGEER on "Honorarium basis". The applications along with required documents shall be deposited in the Office of the undersigned i.e Child Development Project Officer ZAINGEER by or before :15-07-2026 against proper receipt.

S.NO	NAME OF THE DISTRICT	NAME OF THE PROJECT	NAME OF PANCHAYAT/ MUNICIPALITY WARD	VACANCY OF SANGINIS NO. OF PANCH WARD/ MC. WARD	(ANGANWADI Helpers) NAME OF AWC
1	Baramulla	ZAINGEER	Janwara	07	Mukdam Mohalla Pethbugh
2	Baramulla	ZAINGEER	Harwan	07	Lone Mohalla Hank an
3	Baramulla	ZAINGEER	Warpora	04	Telwani Mohalla Warpora
4	Baramulla	ZAINGEER	Bohripora	02	Mir Mohalla-B
5	Baramulla	ZAINGEER	New Brath Kalan	07	Hamdaniya Colony
6	Baramulla	ZAINGEER	Dangerpora	02	Sillpora Dangerpora

Criteria for Selection of Sahayikas (Anganwadi Helpers) shall remain as envisaged in the Govt. Order No: 103 3K (SWD) OF 2023 Dated 28.4.2023 i.e.

- Women candidates in the age group of 18-37 years shall be considered for the post.
- The candidate should be a domicile of the UT of MK
- The candidate should be a resident of Electoral Ward where Anganwadi Centre is located.
- Minimum qualification for Anganwadi Helper shall be Matriculation.
- In case no matriculate candidate is available in the panch Ward, candidates with qualification not less than 8th standard shall be considered.
- The committee shall select the most destitute/needly married women of the ward as helper from amongst those who fulfill the qualification criteria. In case no married candidate is available, unmarried candidate may be considered.

Self-attested copies of documents to be attached with the application form;

- Panch Ward Certificate /present /continuous, ward residence certificate based on the voter list of the ward certificate issued by BDO concerned as per format enclosed, (in case of any dispute as to residence for any reason then the residence proof certifying the ward of residence from the concerned SDM/ACR shall be considered).
 - Domicile Certificate issued by Tehsildar concerned.
 - Date of Birth Certificate.
 - Academic Qualification Certificates with Marks card of 10th.
 - Non employment Certificate from a Gazetted Officer.
- All applicants to submit affidavit stating following facts dully attested by 1st class Magistrate:
- a) Documents submitted are correct, without any mismatch, scanning, duplicate or fallacious in nature. If found incorrect or in any of the above stated situation the candidature of deponent may be cancelled and liable to action under law.
 - b) Maximum qualification in class 10th for Anganwadi Helper and this is as per the facts and nous of proving it to true with the deponent.
 - c) The deponent has read the HR Policy no 222-JK(SWD) of 2022 dated: 30.11.2022 and is well versed with all salient features of the policy and shall be applicable to the deponent in case of selection as Anganwadi Helper

Note: Prescribed application proforma can be had from the undersigned office "Free of cost"

Child Dev. Project Officer Poshan Zaingeer

No: CDPO/POSHAN/ADV/2026/265-80 Dated: 24/06/2026 DIPK-2540/26 DATED: 25-06-2026

FTA with UK most comprehensive agreement so far: Goyal

PTI

London, Jun 25: The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the UK is the most comprehensive agreement that India has entered into so far and "sky is the limit" in terms of the economic benefits that will flow from it, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said here Thursday.

The minister arrived in the UK on a three-day visit to review the preparedness of both countries for the implementation of the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which will enter into force from July 15.

Addressing the India Global Forum (IGF) UK-India Week at the start of his tour, the minister exhorted businesses in both countries to "seize the moment" and set ambitious targets to boost the estimated 48-billion-pound annual bilateral trading partnership on the back of CETA.

Passport was never citizenship proof: Govt sources

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 25: Passport has never been a citizenship proof and no new decision was taken on the document by the Modi government in the last 12 years, government sources said on Thursday.

On media reports on the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) clarifying that a passport is a travel document and not a proof of citizenship, the sources said it was not decided yesterday that passport is not a proof of citizenship.

According to the Passport Act 1967, passports can be given to non-citizens too, the sources said. "It was not decided yesterday that the passport is not a proof of citizenship. It was not even decided in the last 12 years. The passport has never been a proof of citizenship," a source said.

The media reports, quoting MEA officials, said that a passport is a travel document, not a proof of citizenship. It is not a document that establishes citizenship.

TMC leader Mahua Moitra took a dig on the government over the issue.

"It would seem that the only proof of Indian citizenship today is to be both Hindu and a BJP voter. Nothing else will do," she said on X.

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal also hit out at the government over the matter. "Which document then is proof of

citizenship? BLO can doubt my citizenship Deprive me of my vote. Result BJP wins the election. Over to Supreme Court!" he said on X.

Lyracist Javed Akhtar termed the MEA clarification "absurd".

"The ministry of external affairs says that a passport is a document travel not the proof of citizen ship. Really ??? . So are they providing this travel document to some people with out being totally convinced that this person is an Indian citizen ?? . It is absurd," he said on X.

Official sources suggested that the judgements of the Bombay High Court in 2013 have made it clear that passport is not a proof of citizenship.

During the hearing on the Election Commission conducted Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, the Supreme Court had observed that Aadhaar was not conclusive proof of citizenship, just a document of identity.

On December 20, 2019, the government of India's Press Information Bureau (PIB) issued a comprehensive explainer via a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

It said, "Citizenship can be proved by submitting any documents related to date of birth and place of birth. However, a decision is yet to be taken on such acceptable documents".

EU releases 3 billion-euro loan package for Ukraine's recovery

■ 'Part of two-year commitment'

AP

Warsaw, Jun 25: The European Union has disbursed the first 3 billion-euro (USD 3.4 billion) tranche of a 90 billion-euro (USD 101 billion) loan to Ukraine, the country's prime minister announced Thursday at the opening of a conference on Ukraine's post-war recovery in Poland.

The conference, attended by key European leaders including German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, is both a fundraising forum and a message to Russia that Ukraine's Western supporters are in it for the long haul.

"We are forced to innovate to survive, and this has become our superpower," Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said, adding that Ukraine was grateful for the support promised to her war-battered nation.

European countries vow commitment — and investments — for Ukraine. Von der Leyen reassured the EU's financial commitment to Ukraine, just days after the country officially started EU membership negotiations on June 15.

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, EU countries have provided 200 billion euros (USD 225 billion) in economic, financial and military support to Ukraine, and approved 90



billion euros (USD 101 billion) more over the next two years in the form of an EU support loan, she said.

The EU will also start paying another 6 billion euros (USD 6.7 billion), a second tranche from the loan dedicated to drone production, "in the coming days," she added.

In a separate initiative, European leaders meeting in Gdansk said they're kicking off a European equity fund dedicated to investments in strategic sectors of the Ukrainian economy.

"With an initial public package of up to 220 million euros, we are

creating the confidence and the risk-sharing mechanism that private investors need to engage now," Merz said.

The fund originated at last year's recovery conference in Rome, and is supported by the EU, Germany, Poland, Italy and France.

He said that although public funding alone will never be enough to rebuild Ukraine, "by investing now and committing long-term capital, Europe is sending a clear message: we believe in Ukraine's future within the European family."

The Ukrainian delegation is planning to sign 160 deals totalling over

10 billion euros (USD 11.2 billion) during the conference in Gdansk, Svyrydenko said on Thursday.

Ukraine-Poland dispute fails to overshadow the conference

Svyrydenko led the Ukrainian delegation after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pulled out just days before, following a dispute with Polish President Karol Nawrocki over World War II events that have strained the countries' relations.

Nawrocki, this month, stripped Zelenskyy of Poland's highest state honour, because Zelenskyy named a military unit after a Ukrainian paramilitary organisation accused of massacring Poles during the war.

The Ukrainian Insurgent Army, or UPA, fought for Ukrainian independence against both Nazi German and Soviet forces. But it is accused in Poland of wartime killings of tens of thousands of Poles, most in the Nazi-occupied regions of Volhynia and Eastern Galicia, which the Polish state qualifies as genocide.

Zelenskyy has since returned the award to Poland, with other Ukrainian officials also following suit.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said that Zelenskyy's absence at the conference might help reduce the tensions. Svyrydenko made no reference to the dispute in her speech.

"We can only build the future on the basis of truth, mutual respect and understanding the past," Tusk said in his speech.

Venezuela reeling after deadly twin earthquakes

AP

Caracas, Jun 25: Powerful back-to-back earthquakes that struck Venezuela on Wednesday evening killed at least 164 people and injured at least 971, the nation's acting president said, as communities across the South American country sustained damage. Acting President Delcy Rodríguez warned the toll was expected to rise as rescuers search collapsed buildings and emergency crews reach devastated areas after the 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes that struck shortly after 6 p.m.

Rodríguez declared a state of emergency in an address to the nation late Wednesday and said the quakes caused damage in several states. The casualty figures released early Thursday excluded the state of La Guaira, which Rodríguez described as a "disaster zone" and the area hardest hit.

"Dozens of buildings have collapsed there, about 30 kilometers (19 miles) north of Caracas, and we are currently carrying out intensive rescue operations to save lives," she said.

The earthquakes, among the strongest to strike Venezuela in more than a century, roiled the region,



with buildings evacuated in cities and areas impacted as far as Brazil's Amazon about 1,700 kilometers (1,050 miles) from Venezuela's capital Caracas.

Venezuela's state-run VTV showed footage early Thursday of three children, covered in dust but alive, being pulled from the rubble in hard-hit La Guaira.

The broadcaster also said a hospital in the city of Tucacas, about 200 kilometers (120 miles) northwest of Caracas, suffered damage and showed images of dozens of people in what seemed like medical garb in front of the building.

The earthquakes damaged and closed Simón

Bolívar International Airport near Caracas, the country's main airport, Rodríguez said, adding that subway and natural gas services in Caracas were canceled. She urged Venezuelans to report any damages through a government app. Rodríguez said school classes would be canceled for several days. The Ministry of Education said some school buildings would be used as shelters and donation centers.

"We urge our population to remain calm," said Rodríguez, who asked health care professionals to report to hospitals to assist the injured. "We urge unity."

Skiers Arif Khan, Stanzin Lundup to be first Indian recipients of IOC's USD 10k grant for Olympians

PTI

New Delhi, Jun 25: Skiers Arif Mohammad Khan and Stanzin Lundup will be the first Indian beneficiaries of the International Olympic Committee's USD 10,000 grant for Olympians as they had represented the country at this year's Milano-Cortina Winter Games, which would be the starting point for the programme's roll-out.

The grant marks a major shift from over a century old IOC principle of not handing out financial benefits to athletes due to the concept of amateurism enshrined in the Olympic movement. It is a part of IOC's "Fit for the Future" strategic framework to find "new and complementary ways" to provide support to athletes, who qualify for the Games and steer clear of any doping offences.

IOC President Kirsty Coventry has refused to call it prize money, insisting that it is a support payment mechanism. The payouts will begin by the end of this year after examining applications through a soon-to-be-launched mechanism.

The 36-year-old Arif



had produced India's best-ever finish in men's slalom by ending 39th in Milano-Cortina. It was 10 notches higher than India's previous best result in the event, set by Kishore Ratna Rai at the 1988 Games in Calgary.

"This grant is a recognition of what an athlete goes through while preparing for the Olympics. It will give them motivation and yes USD 10,000 (Rs 9.43 lakh) is a decent sum which an athlete can use to his benefit," the two-time South Asian Winter Games gold-medallist told PTI over a phone call.

"In fact, it is not even about the money, it is about the care, IOC is showing athletes that it cares for their journey,

which is very heartening. "This is a grant for the hard work of an Olympic cycle. They are recognising the effort that goes into making an Olympian. It is a huge moment for athletes," added the skier from Jammu and Kashmir's Gulmarg.

The 28-year-old Lundup's debut Winter Games experience was, however, not particularly memorable. He finished 104th in the men's 10km freestyle cross-country skiing event.

This was after a higher-ranked Manjeet Kumar had dragged his selection by IOA to the Delhi High Court, which ruled that the process was indeed "manifestly arbitrary and unfair". However, after the IOA

expressed its inability to make any change to the team composition as the deadline to submit names was long over, the Sports Ministry, taking note of the technical issues involved, eventually approved Lundup's participation.

The Army man from Ladakh ended up being the country's flag-bearer in the Games closing ceremony after Arif got the honour in the opening ceremony.

Chair of the IOC Athletes' Commission, basketball great Pau Gasol said an application process for athletes is being worked out.

"This grant will be available to every Olympian. Not just medal winners. Not just athletes from certain countries. Every Olympian. Because, while every athlete's journey is different, every Olympian has made sacrifices to reach the Olympic stage," Gasol said while announcing the fund which has been capped at USD 140 million per Olympics.

"This is not prize money. This is about recognising the journey and the commitment it takes to become an Olympian," he had further stated echoing Coventry.

Rubio warns Hormuz tolls would 'spread like contagion' to other waterways

AFP

Manama, Jun 25: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Thursday warned that Iranian tolls on ships passing the Strait of Hormuz would spread to other waterways, risking "total chaos."

"International waterways do not belong to any nation state. This is a foundational principle in the world today, without which the world would be in total chaos," he told a Gulf Cooperation Council meeting in Bahrain.

"If in fact we accepted that you can charge money to use an international waterway because it happens to be near your territorial space, well then this will spread throughout the world like a contagion."

Rubio, on his first regional tour since the US and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding to end the Middle East war, said the US wants a peace deal but



not "at any price."

"While we want a deal, we don't want a deal at any price," he said. "We want a deal that's good, we want a deal that's real, we want a deal that's verifiable, and we want a deal that's adhered to."

The top US diplomat, who has visited the heavily attacked UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain

on his tour, also gave assurances that the interests of Gulf countries would be taken into account.

"We want to ensure... that there is no part of this deal that's undertaken that in any way undermines the security, the stability, or the prosperity of any of our partners in the Gulf region," he said.

US Open badminton: Tanvi, Srikanth advance

PTI

Fullerton (US), Jun 25: World Junior Championship silver-medallist Tanvi Sharma and the seasoned Kidambi Srikanth began their US Open badminton campaign with comfortable wins here.

Tanvi defeated Yvonne Li of Germany 23-21, 21-16 while Devika Sihag, who is the reigning Thailand Masters champion, beat Ines Lucia Castillo of Peru 21-14, 21-14 in the women's singles first round on Wednesday.

In the first of the two all-Indian men's clashes, the promising Rounak Chouhan defeated former world junior silver-medallist S Sankar Muthusamy 23-21, 21-16.

Fifth seed Kidambi Srikanth dominated the match against compatriot D Saneeth winning 21-14, 21-12 in just 30 minutes.



MOVIES SCHEDULE

FRIDAY • 26 JUNE

<p>CARRY ON JATTA 4 (PUNJABI) (U/A 13+) 03:20 PM</p>	
<p>MAIN VAAPAS AAUNGA (HINDI) (U/A 16+) 06:15 PM</p>	
<p>COCKTAIL 2 (HINDI) (A) 04:00 PM 07:00 PM</p>	
<p>SUPERGIRL (ENG WITH ENG SUBTITLE) (U/A 16+) 01:30 PM</p>	
<p>WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE (HINDI) (ATMOS) (U/A 16+) 04:30 PM 07:45 PM</p>	

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