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Showcase Jammu; organise tours for Amarnath pilgrims: LG Sinha to officials

Commends hard work of all officials; asks them to treat every Yatri as divine guest



Yogesh

Jammu, Jul 15: Directing officials to showcase Jammu and organize sightseeing tours of key spiritual and tourism spots for Amarnath pilgrims in the region, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Wednesday reiterated his resolve to make this year's yatra truly historic.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer

(KNO) the Lieutenant Governor on Wednesday visited the Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in Jammu and reviewed the facilities and services in place for the ongoing pilgrimage.

LG Sinha interacted with the officials from J&K Police, Army, Security Forces, Shrine Board, and Civil Administration, and took stock of the measures taken to facilitate the comfortable stay of the pilgrims. He commended their hard work and

urged them to treat every Yatri as a divine guest.

"With the holy pilgrimage already crossing the 3 lakh mark in just 12 days, ensuring a smooth and hassle-free experience for pilgrims is our top priority," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor stressed on ensuring flawless registration, comfortable lodging, and smooth travel arrangements for all | [More on P6](#)



Lupin flowers in full bloom at Gulmarg, drawing tourists to the renowned picturesque ski resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. Pic: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

3.24 lakh pilgrims complete Amarnath Yatra in 13 days

22,599 perform darshan on Wednesday

Fresh batch of 6,251 devotees leaves Jammu

Total departures near one lakh

CISF DG reviews security

Umair Gull Ganie

Srinagar, Jul 15: The annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra continued to witness an overwhelming response, with 22,599 pilgrims performing darshan at the holy cave shrine on Wednesday, taking the total number of devotees who have completed the pilgrimage to 3,24,525 in the first 13 days of the Yatra.

According to official figures

obtained by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), those who performed darshan on Wednesday included 16,156 men, 5,665 women, 346 children, 86 sadhus, 13 sadhvis, 10 transgender devotees and 323 security personnel.

A fresh batch of 6,251 pilgrims, including 50 foreign devotees, left the Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in Jammu early Wednesday under multi-layered security arrangements for the twin base camps of Baltal and Nunwan.

Officials said 2,985 pilgrims opted for the shorter Baltal route, while 3,266 proceeded towards the Nunwan base camp via the traditional Pahalgam route.

The convoy comprised 230 vehicles, including 137 buses, 34 medium | [More on P6](#)

Kashmir set for hottest days of season before wet spell returns

Srinagar may touch 36-37°C over next 3-days | Widespread rain, heavy showers expected from Jul 18 night



Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jul 15: A prolonged spell of hot, dry weather is expected to grip Kashmir over the next three days, with Srinagar likely to record the season's highest temperature of 36-37 degrees Celsius.

An official of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer that the heat wave will be followed by widespread rainfall from the night of July 18.

The Meteorological Centre, Srinagar stated that J&K's summer capital Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 32.0°C on Wednesday, 1.9°C above normal, while the minimum settled

at 19.0°C, 0.3°C above normal. Jammu recorded 34.7°C, 0.7°C above normal.

It said weather is likely to remain generally hot and humid with the possibility of brief spells of rain or thundershowers at a few places between July 15 and 17.

Independent weather forecaster Kashmir Weather Forecast said a prolonged spell of dry, hot and stable weather is expected to persist across the Valley until July 18, with daytime temperatures across the plains likely to remain 5-8°C above the seasonal average, significantly increasing heat stress.

It said Srinagar could witness its highest temperature of the season, with | [More on P6](#)

NC to leave for Delhi on July 19 even without permission: CM Omar



'Jantar Mantar protest unchanged, alternate plan ready'

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jul 15: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said the National Conference (NC) will leave for New Delhi on July 19 even if authorities deny permission for the party's proposed protest at Jantar Mantar, asserting that the programme for the

restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's "snatched rights" will continue as scheduled.

Speaking to reporters here, Abdullah, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said there would be no change in the party's protest programme.

"Our protest at Jantar Mantar remains unchanged," the CM said, adding that the party would continue to wait for permission while keeping an alternate | [More on P6](#)

Kashmir opposition likely to skip NC's Jantar Mantar protest

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jul 15: The Kashmir-based opposition parties are likely to give a miss to Jantar Mantar protest being organised by the National Conference (NC) on July 20 over the demand

for restoration of statehood. Sources disclosed to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the PDP may decide against joining the protest programme organised by the NC. "There is every likelihood that the | [More on P6](#)

Man dies after shooting stone hits car near Ramban

KNO Correspondent

Ramban, Jul 15: A man was killed after a shooting stone hit his car on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway near Ramban on Wednesday, officials said.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the man was returning home after dropping another person in Ramban | [More on P6](#)

Artificial Intelligence has reshaped job market: LG Sinha

'Today we stand on threshold of new era, AI has become part of our lives'

KT News Desk

Jammu, Jul 15: Asserting that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has changed the way we educate and hire the workforce, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday said that it has fundamentally reshaped the job market, defining the economic landscape in the new era.

Delivering a keynote address on "AI: Effects and Side Effects" on the 20th Punya Smriti Diwas of Dr Suresh Awasthi Smriti Nyas in Varanasi virtually, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, Dr Awasthi, a remarkable personality who embodied knowledge and humility. "Dr Awasthi was a distinguished scholar



and a visionary who saw political science as a powerful instrument for shaping society and strengthening the nation."

The Lieutenant Governor observed that Dr. Awasthi inspired independent thinking and his ideals | [More on P6](#)

Inclusion of Bhairav Yatra into ICH's national inventory proud moment for Rajouri: LG

KT News Desk

Sating that inclusion of historic Bhairav Yatra into National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India is a proud moment for Rajouri, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday congratulated the district administration and Department of Culture for turning this dream into a reality.

In a post on X, the Lieutenant Governor, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said: "Proud moment | [More on P6](#)

'Don't judge Kashmir by conflict headlines': Argentine tourists reveal different reality

Say Valley's true identity lies in its people, culture, breathtaking landscapes

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jul 15: Calling Kashmir "far more than the headlines," an Argentine couple on Wednesday said the Valley's true story lies in its breathtaking landscapes, warm-hearted people and rich cultural traditions that deserve to be experienced firsthand.

The duo also urged the world not to judge Kashmir solely through conflict-related headlines, saying they hope to return as there is still much of the Valley left to explore once more trekking routes and remote destinations reopen.

Speaking exclusively to the



news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Florencia

Bernal (37), a COBOL developer and Maximiliano Gattari (41),

a restaurant owner, both from Buenos Aires, Argentina, said Kashmir had long been on their travel bucket list because of its mountains and unique cultural heritage.

The couple said they arrived with concerns shaped by international media coverage but left with an entirely different perspective.

"We mostly heard about the political situation and security concerns before coming. But what we discovered was breathtaking landscapes, genuinely kind people and a culture that deserves to be known beyond the | [More on P6](#)

As Wular turns toxic, women harvesters watch generations-old livelihood fade

Scientific study detects heavy metals in water chestnuts

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jul 15: Every morning before sunrise, dozens of women from villages surrounding Kashmir's Wular Lake push their wooden boats into the sprawling freshwater body to harvest green water chestnuts, a seasonal occupation that has sustained their families for generations.

But this year, they say, the work has become harder, the harvest smaller and the lake itself increasingly hostile.

Standing for hours in waist-deep water, many women now wear gloves and face masks to

protect themselves from what they describe as foul-smelling, polluted water that leaves their hands itching and causes skin rashes after prolonged exposure.

"In earlier years, one woman could collect over 30 kilograms of water chestnuts in a day. Now we barely manage 10 to 15 kilograms," 45-year-old harvester Shafeeqa Begum from Lankreshipora village told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

"The water has turned dark and gives off a bad smell. Without gloves, our hands start itching. We grew up

working in this lake, but now we fear entering it," she said.

The women, who harvest the edible crop between July and September, said falling water levels, dense weed growth and deteriorating water quality have sharply reduced both the quantity and quality of the produce, cutting into the earnings of fishing households that depend on the seasonal harvest.

Another harvester, Ateeqa Bano, said spending long hours in the lake has become physically difficult.

"We spend the entire morning inside the | [More on P6](#)

CS Atal Dulloo reviews implementation of new Labour Codes



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JULY 15: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo chaired a review meeting on Wednesday to assess the preparedness of the Labour & Employment Department for the implementation of the Four Labour Codes enacted by the Government of India.

The meeting, as per an official statement, besides Secretary, Labour & Employment was attended by the Commissioner Secretary, Law; DG, Codes; Labour Commissioner; and other senior officers.

During the meeting, the Department made a comprehensive presentation highlighting the status of rule-making, institutional preparedness, digital integration, awareness initiatives and the roadmap for operationalising the new labour law regime across the Union Territory.

The Chief Secretary observed that the Labour Codes represent a transformative reform capable of improving labour welfare, strengthening social security, promoting industrial harmony and enhancing ease of doing business.

He expressed confidence that their effective implementation would contribute significantly towards inclusive economic growth, formalisation of employment, improved working conditions and transparent labour governance in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

The Chief Secretary appreciated the efforts made by the Labour & Employment Department in advancing implementation of the Labour Codes and emphasised the need to complete the remaining procedural formalities within the stipulated timeframe. He directed the Department to expedite final notification of the remaining Rules, strengthen coordination with the Government of India for operationalisation of digital platforms, complete constitution of the statutory Boards and continue intensive awareness programmes so that workers, employers and all

stakeholders are fully prepared for seamless implementation of the new labour law framework.

The Secretary L&E, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan while speaking highlighted that the Labour Codes constitute one of the most significant labour reforms undertaken in independent India, replacing 29 Central Labour Laws with four comprehensive Codes, namely the Code on Wages, 2019, Industrial Relations Code, 2020, Code on Social Security, 2020, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020. The reforms aim to create a simplified, transparent, technology-driven and worker-centric labour governance framework while simultaneously enhancing the Ease of Doing Business.

Giving the progress made by the Department, the Secretary further informed that Jammu & Kashmir has made substantial progress in implementing the Labour Codes and is among the leading States and Union Territories in completing the statutory rule-making process.

The Labour Commissioner, Charandeep Singh informed the meeting that Rules under all four Labour Codes have been framed. The Rules under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 have already been finally notified in the Official Gazette after their approval by the authorities.

Similarly the Rules under the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 are at the final stage of notification, while the Rules under the Code on Wages, 2019 and the Code on Social Security, 2020 have been pre-published after approval and are presently undergoing the statutory consultation process before final notification.

The meeting was informed that extensive awareness and outreach programmes have already been undertaken across the Union Territory. As many as 617 Information, Education and Communication (IEC) camps have been organised across all twenty districts,

sensitising nearly five lakh workers, employers and stakeholders regarding the provisions and benefits of the new Labour Codes.

Simultaneously, it was added that 283 capacity-building programmes have been conducted, benefiting over 7,200 officers, employers, trade unions and other stakeholders, besides specialised training programmes conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour & Employment.

During the presentation, the Department highlighted several transformational reforms introduced under the Labour Codes. These include universal minimum wage protection for all employees irrespective of occupation, introduction of a National Floor Wage, a common definition of wages across all four Codes for ensuring higher Provident Fund, gratuity and other social security benefits to the workers.

The Chief Secretary was informed that implementation of the Labour Codes would require constitution of four statutory bodies, namely the State Social Security Board for Unorganised Workers, Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board, State Advisory Board on Wages and Industrial Relations, and the Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Board, which shall provide policy guidance and oversee implementation of various welfare measures envisaged under the Codes.

The Labour & Employment Department also presented a comprehensive implementation strategy involving establishment of a dedicated Project Management Unit, deployment of block-level Shram Sahayiks, strengthening of IT infrastructure, integration with national labour portals, extensive awareness campaigns and institutional capacity building. A proposal amounting to Rs. 10.44 crore has already been submitted to the Finance Department to facilitate mission-mode implementation of the Labour Codes across Jammu & Kashmir.

TRAI conducts consumer outreach programme on telecom, broadcasting services in Leh

KT News Desk

Leh, July 15: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Regional Office Delhi, Wednesday organised a Consumer Outreach Programme on Tariff and Billing in Telecom and Broadcasting Services at the Headquarters of Chief Engineer (CE) Project Himank, Choglamsar, Leh.

The programme, as per a PIB statement, witnessed enthusiastic participation from representatives of telecom service providers, defence personnel of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and their family members.

During the programme, Rajesh Tripathi, Joint Advisor, TRAI, Sushil Kumar Bansal, Senior Research Officer, and Suresh K. V., along with representatives from Airtel, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Reliance Jio, delivered technical sessions on consumer protection, tariff and billing-related provisions in telecom and broadcasting services. The sessions focused on creating greater awareness among consumers about their rights and the regulatory framework governing these services.

Inspector Shamim of the Ladakh Police also delivered an informative session on cyber hygiene, highlighting safe digital practices and measures to safeguard against cyber threats.

DC Srinagar inspects key ongoing development works at Children's Hospital Bemina, Revenue Complex Shaletang

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR JULY 15: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Wednesday conducted an extensive inspection of the ongoing development works on the Foot Over Bridge (FOB) near Children's Hospital Bemina and the Attendant Sarai/Accommodation being constructed within the hospital premises.

He also took onsite review of the works on construction of Revenue Complex Shalteng.

The visit, as per an official statement, was aimed at reviewing the progress of these key public infrastructure projects and ensuring their timely completion.

At Children Hospital Bemina, the Deputy Commissioner inspected the ongoing construction of the Foot Over Bridge (FOB) near the hospital. He reviewed the physical progress of the project and stressed the need to expedite the works so that the bridge can be made operational at the earliest. He noted that the FOB, equipped with escalators, will provide a safe and convenient passage for pedestrians, particularly patients, attendants and local residents, while also helping regulate traffic movement in the busy hospital area.

The DC also inspected the construction site of the Attendant Sarai at Children's Hospital Bemina and reviewed the status of the facility being developed to provide comfortable accommodation and essential amenities for attendants accompanying patients from different parts of the Kashmir Valley. He directed the



executing agency to ensure the timely completion of the project so that the facility can be dedicated to the public at the earliest.

Earlier, at the Revenue Complex, Shalteng, the Deputy Commissioner inspected the construction of the new Tehsil Office and the Office building of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) West. He assessed the quality of construction works and the pace of work being carried out by the executing agency.

On the occasion, the DC was apprised that the upcoming Tehsil Office will house key functional spaces, including the Tehsildar's Room, Tehsildar's Courtroom, Waiting Area, Naib Tehsildar's Room, Staff Room, Meeting Room, Computer Room, Establishment Section, and Record Room, among other facilities.

ATMA: DC Kupwara flags off exposure tour of fish farmers

KT News Desk

KUPWARA, JULY 15: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Srikanth Suse Wednesday flagged off an exposure tour of 40 fish farmers organised by the Department of Fisheries under the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) programme. Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner, as

per an official statement, highlighted the immense potential of the fisheries sector in Kupwara and emphasized the importance of exposure visits in enabling farmers to learn scientific and modern aquaculture practices. He urged the participants to make optimum use of government schemes to enhance fish production, improve productivity, and generate sustainable livelihoods.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER IRRIGATION DIVISION ANANTNAG

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS

Notice Inviting short term E-Tenders-NIT No.08of 2026-27

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of J and K U.T, e-tenders on percentage basis are invited in Single cover system from approved and eligible contractors registered with J&K U.T Govt. for the following works: -

S. NO.	NAME OF WORK	Estt Cost (Rs in lacs)	Earnest Money (EMD) Rs	Time for completion	Class of Contract	Cost of Tender document (Rs)	Major Head of Account	Tender opening authority
1	Toe Protection to Existing Lining wall of Dalkha ladi at aadi Koshpora of Damhal Irrigation Network by way of Crate work	4.00	12000/=	08 days	DEE	200/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer
2	Restoration of Khulpora Ladh Soaf by way of Crate work and Lining wall.	4.00	12000/=	08 days	DEE	200/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer
3	Construction of Hydraulic Riser on Shaji Khul at Offtake point at Vailoo.	4.04	12120/=	08 days	DEE	200/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer
4	Restoration of Dalwatch ladi by way of Construction of RCC channel and Toe Protection by Crate Work from RD 460mtrs to 650mtrs at Spots.	9.99	29970/=	10 days	DEE/CEE	300/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer
5	Construction of check Dam on river Arpath near Cricket Stadium at Krad.	4.00	12000/=	08 days	DEE	200/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer
6	Restoration of right side embankment of D2 branch of Martand canal near RD 700mtrs by way of construction of Retaining wall, Raising and RCC jacketing.	2.32	6960/=	06 days	DEE	200/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer
7	Strengthening of right side embankment of D1 branch of Martand canal near RD 3000mtrs.	2.14	6420/=	06 days	DEE	200/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer
8	Construction of Lining wall on Both Sides of Gratt Khul at Aishmuagam.	9.49	28470/=	10 days	DEE/CEE	300/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer
9	Checking of Leakages of Delivery Tank with field Channel of LIS Panchpora including extension of drainage network.	4.00	12000/=	08 days	DEE	200/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer
10	Construction of Lining wall on Right side near RD 1160mtrs of Magraypora minor of D3 branch of Martand canal.	4.50	13500/=	08 days	DEE	200/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer
11	Development and Repair of Feeder canal Bul Bul Nowgam Phase 2nd	4.50	13500	08 days	DEE	200/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer
12	Toe protection to existing boulder bund of sadoora ladh.	3.48	10440/=	08 days	DEE	200/-	District Capex	Ex. Engineer

The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria , specifications , bill of quantities (BOQ) set to terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the departmental [website www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) from :-

Publishing date	15.07.2026	02.00PM
Download Date Starts	15.07.2026	02.00PM
BID Submission Date Starts	15.07.2026	02.00PM
BID Submission Date Ends	29.07.2026	06.00 PM
Date of opening of tenders	30.07.2026	10:00 AM

The bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the website www.jktenders.gov.in and The bids uploaded shall be opened online on above mentioned date by the Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Anantnag in presence of the bidders who may wish to be present. In case of holiday or office happening to be closed on the basis of opening of the bid, the same will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

1. Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copies (on 100dpi) of all necessary documents like Cost of Tender document in the form of Treasury Challan in favour of Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Anantnag / latest GST clearance certificate (GSTR-3B and GSTR-1) / Registration card duly renewed along with Verification/BID Security in the form of EMD as per above. And Additional performance security as per below (2). (EMD CDR and Additional Performance Security CDR shall be deposited separately for each item of work). The date of CDR/FDR/BG should be between the date of start of bid and bid submission end date. After opening of tenders online, the 1st lowest bidder shall be asked to deposit the CDR/FDR/additional performance security pledged to tender receiving authority and other documents in original. The CDR/ FDR / additional performance security and other documents in original shall be deposited within two days positively after opening of tenders. The EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR of the successful bidder will be retained as performance security deposit till expiry of defect liability period, whereas the EMD of unsuccessful bidders will be returned latest by 30 days after award of the contract.

The check list of documents for cover 1* is attached with the NIT & bidders are advised to recheck the uploaded documents as per the Check list. 2. Additional Performance Security is to be uploaded by the bidder at the time of bid submission in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG as per the Circular issued by the Finance Department vide No.FD-Code/441/2021-02-158 dated 08-08-2025 if the bid percentage is below 10% . The additional performance guarantee/security shall be treated as a part of performance security.

3. The CDR/APS/FDR/Security Deposit uploaded during tendering shall be properly verified from the issuing bank before awarding the contract. Furthermore if at any stage the CDR/APS/FDR/Security Deposit are found to be false/ forged/ fraudulent, action as warranted under rules shall be initiated against the contractor as laid down in Procurement of Manual of works GFR 2017 besides blacklisting the contractor from tendering process.

4. If the successful bidder is seriously unbalanced or front loaded in the opinion of the Tender Opening Committee. The Tender opening Committee may in such cases seek written clarifications from the bidder, including detailed price analyses of its bid price in relation to scope, schedule, resource mobilization, allocation of risks and responsibilities and any other requirements of the bid's documents besides Additional Performance Security as per above breakup. If, after evaluating the price analyses , procuring entity determines that the bidder has substantially failed to demonstrate its capability to deliver the contract at the offered price, the Tender Opening Committee may reject the bid/proposal. A bid which contains several items in Bill of Quantities which are unrealistically priced low and which cannot be substantiated satisfactorily by the bidder may be rejected as non-responsive.

5. Contractor / Bidder who fails to submit the CDR/FDR / Treasury Challan as required, their EMD will be forfeited besides they will be barred/ prohibited from participating in the Tendering process for a period of Six Months (06 Months) in the first instance. Their online uploaded tenders will not be considered for the said period.

6. Contractor who shall be allotted the work has to start the work within the stipulated time period after the date of allotment as the work is of very important nature.

7. The department shall not be responsible for delay in online submission of bids due to any reason what so ever.

8. The tenders shall remain valid for 90 days.(Ninety Days)

9. As soon as the contract is fixed with the successful bidder, he has to enter into an agreement with the department.

10. The earnest money shall be forfeited if:-

a) Any bidder withdraws his bid during the period of bid validity or makes any modification in terms & condition of the bid.

b) The successful bidder fails to execute an agreement with the department within 10 days after fixation of contract.

11. The tender opening authority reserves the right to accept/reject the bid without assigning any reason therefor.

12. The work is to be completed within the time limit specified in the NIT. In case of delay in completion of work due to contractors fault beyond stipulated time of completion the contractor shall be liable to pay liquidated damages at the rate of 0.5 % of the contract value (half percent) per week of delay. However, such liquidated damages shall not exceed 10% of the total contract value of the item, or a part thereof, delayed.

13. No price escalation will be paid for completion of the work within stipulated time or extended date of completion due to any reason whatsoever.

14. Retention Money/Security deposit shall be 10% of the contract value. The Security Deposit is to be recovered at the rate of 10% of bill amount from Running Account Bills and shall be released after completion of the defect liability period i.e; 06 months after the issuance of completion certificate by the Engineer-in-Charge.

15. All items of works shall conform to Specifications as per Relevant IS codes and as directed by the Engineer-in Charge.

16. The contractor shall be solely responsible for carrying out the mandatory tests required or as decided by Engineer-in-charge for the quality control at his own costs. The cost of conducting all tests shall be borne by the contractor and shall be deemed to have been included in the quoted percentage rate tendered. Nothing extra shall be payable on this account.

17. In case of tie for the position of 1st lowest bidder the bids should be out rightly rejected and the work shall be put to fresh tenders

18. The date of start of work shall be reckoned within one week from the date of issuance of LOI/Contract allotment as the case may be.

19. The Contract shall be terminated in case contractor fails to start /complete the work, within the stipulated time period, his Earnest Money/Performance Security /additional performance deposit shall be forfeited after termination of the contract. Besides, defaulting contractor shall be barred/ Prohibited from taking part in future tendering process in Irrigation Department at least for Six Months

20. The employer may terminate the contract if the contractor causes a fundamental breach of the contract. The fundamental breach of contract will include:-

a) Continuous stoppage of Work for a period of 07 days without authorization of Engineer in-charge.

b) The contractor fails to start /complete the work, within the stipulated time period.

Pursuant to the process of termination of defaulted contract, the employer reserves the right to invite fresh tender for the balance work at the risk and cost of defaulter contractor. Besides, his Performance Security/Retention Money shall be forfeited after termination of the contract and defaulting contractor shall be debarred from taking works in Irrigation Department at least for one year.

21. Any kind of damage which may occur to any work during the course of execution due to torrential rains/heavy snow fall/cyclone/floods etc. shall be the responsibility of the bidder till the work is finally handed-over to the Department.

22. The taxes viz. Income tax, GST & Cess shall be deducted from the bidders' claims as admissible under rules.

23. The bidders are advised not to make any change in BOQ (Bill of Quantities). In no case they should attempt to create similar BOQ manually. The BOQ downloaded should be used for filling percentage rate inclusive of all taxes & it should be saved with the same name as it contains.

24. Any typographical error in respect of units mismatch with the SSR, if any, may be taken as well as what is recorded in SSR and is binding upon the Contractor.

25. Bidders shall give undertaking towards the submission of authentic information/documents. All the participating bidders should be fully cognizant that if the documents uploaded/submitted with the bid are found to be fake/not genuine/forged/tempered, they will be blacklisted from participating in this division/department for a period as decided by higher authorities and the bidder to whom the contract is awarded on the basis of uploaded/submitted documents, are later discovered to be fake/not genuine/forged/tempered , the contract will be cancelled and the performance security deposit and work done claim for the said work being forfeited. Furthermore no clarification/ claim shall be entertained after opening the tender.

26. Instructions to Bidders:-

A Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual" on website www.jktenders.gov.in acquaint bid submission process.

Statehood is BJP's agenda, Art 370 is people's demand: MP Ruhullah

Dismisses rumours of floating new political party

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Jul 15: "The restoration of statehood is the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) agenda. The real aspiration of the people of Jammu and Kashmir remains the restoration of Articles 370 and 35A, along with constitutional safeguards for land, jobs and identity," Member of Parliament (MP), Srinagar, Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi said on Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters after addressing a gathering in Bijbehara area of Anantnag district, Ruhullah dismissed reports suggesting that he was planning to float a new political party, terming such claims as baseless rumours.

"If I ever have to form a political party, I will announce it myself. There is no question of doing it secretly or through rumours," he said.

The MP said there was no immediate need for new political formations if sincere and committed leaders within existing political parties began advocating for the real concerns of the people. "We do not need to



create new parties if the right people, irrespective of religion, come forward within the existing political parties and speak honestly about the rights and aspirations of the people. Unless that happens, these issues will continue to persist," he said.

Ruhullah urged media organisations and journalists to verify facts before publishing or circulating unverified reports. "Responsible and fact-based journalism is essential in maintaining public trust," he said.

Launching a sharp attack on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Mehdi recalled that during the Assembly election campaign, Omar had accused those speaking only about statehood of

acting as "agents of the BJP".

"The Chief Minister is now himself focusing only on the restoration of statehood while remaining silent on other commitments made to the people," he said.

Ruhullah alleged that the demand for statehood alone was insufficient and accused the government of ignoring the larger issues concerning the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"The people did not vote only for statehood. They voted for promises related to the restoration of Articles 370 and 35A, protection of land and jobs, and constitutional guarantees. Those issues cannot simply be ignored," he said.

The Member Parliament also claimed that

the demand for statehood appeared to be driven by a desire to restore administrative authority rather than address the concerns of the people.

"What people need today is protection of their rights. Statehood alone cannot fulfil the promises that were made to the people," he said.

Calling on people across communities to raise their voices for justice and constitutional rights, Mehdi said he was ready to bear any consequences for speaking on behalf of the people. "People themselves must speak for their rights. I will be the first person to face any consequences for raising these issues," he said.

Reiterating his commitment, the MP said he would continue to raise the voice of the people and fight for their rights, irrespective of political consequences.

Ruhullah addressed the gathering at the residence of Sajad Mufti, a former IFS officer and the cousin of PDP president Mehbooba Mufti. Religious scholar Dr Sameer Shafi Siddiqui, another

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.

NMC releases MBBS seat matrix for 2026-27



KNO

Srinagar, Jul 15: The National Medical Commission (NMC) has released the MBBS Seat Matrix for the 2026-27 academic session, directing all medical colleges across the country to ensure admissions are made strictly against the number of seats approved by the Commission.

In an official communication issued by NMC Secretary Dr Raghav Langer, the Commission informed Directors, Principals and Deans of all medical colleges that had submitted applications under the NMC public notice dated December 22, 2025, as well as the Medical Counselling Committee (MCC), about the approved undergraduate seat matrix for the upcoming academic year.

According to the communication, the NMC stated that the seat matrix has been issued in accordance with a public notice released by the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB). However, it clarified that the published seat matrix will remain subject to revision, if required, based on decisions taken by the Appeal Committee or any other competent authority. The

Commission instructed all medical colleges and institutions to strictly adhere to the approved intake capacity and emphasised that no admissions should be made beyond the number of seats authorised for the 2026-27 academic session.

"All Medical Colleges shall strictly ensure that admissions are made only against the approved number of seats for the Academic Year 2026-27," the communication states.

The NMC also asked the Medical Counselling Committee and other concerned counselling authorities to follow the revised seat matrix while conducting the counselling and admission process.

According to the Commission, the instructions are aimed at ensuring transparency, maintaining uniformity in admissions, and preventing institutions from admitting students beyond their sanctioned capacity.

The communication has urged all medical colleges, institutions and other stakeholders to carefully note the directions issued by the Commission and ensure their strict compliance during the admission process—(KNO)

Sessions Court stays Suo-Moto order against SSP Srinagar



Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jul 15: The Court of Second Additional Sessions Judge, Srinagar, has stayed the order passed by the Court of City Judge/Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) against the Senior Superintendent of Police, Srinagar.

In its order, the Court observed that it was satisfied the revision petition raises arguable questions warranting consideration.

"The submission requires examination after the record of the learned Court is made available. At this interlocutory stage, and without expressing any opinion on the controversy, the Court is satisfied that the revision raises arguable questions warranting consideration," the order stated.

The Court stayed the operation and implementation of the order passed suo motu by the City Judge/JMIC, Srinagar: "Send for records in scanned form. In the meanwhile, the operation and implementation of the order dated 06.07.2026 (suo motu) passed by the learned City Judge/JMIC is hereby stayed," the order reads.

The matter has been listed for appropriate orders on July 27, 2026—(KNO)

SMC ties up with coaching centres for sanitation workers kids

KT News Desk

Srinagar, July 15: The Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) has reached out to coaching institutions across the city to explore a collaborative framework for extending scholarship-based coaching and academic support to meritorious children of its sanitation workers.

Chairing an interaction with representatives of coaching institutions, the Commissioner, SMC, Faz Lul Haseeb, called upon the city's educational community to partner with the Corporation in creating meaningful educational opportunities for children of sanitation workers, who remain at the frontline of maintaining Srinagar's cleanliness, sanitation and public health.

The proposed programme envisages voluntary participation by coaching institutions, which may earmark a limited number of seats for deserving students and extend educational scholarships and other academic support, including study material, test series, mentoring and career

guidance. The Commissioner said the initiative was part of the Corporation's broader efforts to strengthen the welfare of its sanitation workforce, with an emphasis on education as a means of long-term empowerment and inter-generational social mobility.

"Those who work tirelessly to keep Srinagar clean make an invaluable contribution to the city every day. Supporting the education and aspirations of their children is one of the most meaningful ways in which the larger community can acknowledge that contribution," the Commissioner said.

The SMC proposes to put in place a transparent mechanism for identifying eligible students based on merit and objective criteria and facilitate their placement with participating coaching institutions.

The modalities of the programme will be finalised in consultation with the coaching institutions, with the Corporation seeking to build a sustainable partnership

Continued on
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Children's hospital gets foot-over bridge, attendant accommodation

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jul 15: In a significant relief for patients and their families, the Srinagar district administration has initiated the construction of a much-awaited foot-over bridge at the 500-bed Children's Hospital Beminna. It also announced plans to build an accommodation facility for attendants, addressing two long-pending issues at the premier pediatric healthcare institution.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, who visited the hospital on Wednesday, said the foot-over bridge has been planned after the administration assessed the difficulties faced daily by patients, attendants and hospital staff. "The bridge will connect different hospital blocks and will be equipped with staircases as well as an escalator to ensure easier movement, particularly for critically ill children and their caregivers," the DC said.

The development comes against the backdrop of repeated concerns raised by patients and attendants over the absence of a safe crossing outside the hospital. Earlier, families had complained that they were forced to cross the busy road amid heavy traffic due to the lack of a zebra crossing or foot-over bridge, exposing children and attendants to the risk of accidents.



Attendants had also pointed out that ambulances often faced delays in reaching the hospital because they were required to take a U-turn nearly two kilometres ahead before entering the hospital premises, causing inconvenience during medical emergencies.

The Deputy Commissioner said the bridge project is expected to substantially improve accessibility and make movement within and around the hospital safer and more convenient for thousands of people who visit the facility from different parts of the Kashmir Valley. In another major initiative, the DC announced that the district administration will construct a dedicated accommodation facility (Sarai) for attendants through the District Mineral Fund (DMF).

The proposed facility, he said, will include around 15 rooms, two large

dormitories, a dining hall, toilets and washrooms, allowing attendants accompanying children from far-flung districts to stay close to the hospital at an affordable cost during prolonged treatment.

The absence of such a facility has long been a concern, with many attendants forced to spend nights in hospital corridors, open spaces or rented accommodation due to the lack of affordable lodging near the hospital.

Labroo said administrative approval for the project will be secured shortly, following which construction work will begin.

During his visit, the Deputy Commissioner also reviewed the progress of other developmental works in the district. He said construction of the new Tehsil office is progressing satisfactorily, while work on the SDM office and SDM West office will be allotted soon.

Responding to questions regarding drinking water shortages in several parts

Continued on
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Kashmir to host maiden North India Powerlifting Championship

KNO

Srinagar, Jul 15: Jammu and Kashmir is set to host the North India Powerlifting Championship for the first time, with the event scheduled in the first week of August and registrations already underway.

Fardeem Hussain, President of the International Authority of Bodybuilding, Powerlifting, Fitness and Army Wrestling (AIB-PFA), said around 100 athletes from various northern states are expected to participate in the championship.

He said this will be the first-ever North India Powerlifting Championship to be hosted in Jammu and Kashmir, providing local athletes with an opportunity to compete on home turf against some of the best powerlifters from across the region.

"Earlier, such championships were organised in other states, making it difficult for many athletes from Jammu and Kashmir to participate because of travel distance and expenses. Hosting the event in

Kashmir will provide a major platform for our athletes to showcase their talent," Hussain said.

He said the organisers have announced a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh for the winner and have already started receiving enquiries from athletes and teams from several northern states, reflecting strong interest in the event.

The championship will feature competitions across multiple weight categories and age groups and is expected to promote powerlifting and strength sports in the Union Territory.

Hussain said women athletes will also be a key part of the championship and will compete in different weight categories with equal opportunities and prize money. "We want to encourage more women to take up powerlifting and strength sports. Female athletes will participate in different categories and compete for the same prize money as men," he said.

He added that
Continued on
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Canine Terror Stray dogs injure three dozen people in Budgam

Naveed Ul Haq Ganaie

Budgam, Jul 15: Nearly three dozen people have been injured in a series of stray dog attacks reported from different areas of Central Kashmir's Budgam district during the past two days, triggering panic among residents and prompting demands for immediate intervention by the authorities.

Locals said that the attacks were reported from Chadoora, Sanzipora and Chattergam areas, where men, women and children were among those bitten



by stray dogs.

They said several of the injured were shifted to Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Chadoora, while others

were treated at Chattergam Hospital. All the victims were administered Anti-Rabies Vaccine (ARV), they added. Block Medical

Officer (BMO) Chadoora, Dr Riyaz said that the hospital has received more than 20 dog-bite cases over the last two days.

"We have received over 20 patients with dog bites. The matter has been taken up with the higher authorities, and we have written to them seeking immediate and appropriate action to prevent further attacks," the BMO said.

Local resident Ashraf Ahmad said, "People, especially children, women and the elderly, are scared

Continued on
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CEL seeks audit, inquiry into sanitation, finances at Baba Reshi shrine

Waris Fayaz

Srinagar, Jul 15: A day after KNO highlighted sanitation and environmental concerns at Baba Reshi shrine, the Centre for Environmental Law (CEL) has sought an independent inquiry into the shrine administration's functioning, including an audit of funds utilised for sanitation and environmental management.

Amicus Curiae and Chief Executive Director of CEL, Advocate Nadeem Qadri, in a detailed representation submitted to the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board, alleged violations of environmental laws, poor waste management practices and possible irregularities in

the utilisation of funds meant for maintenance and cleanliness of the shrine.

The representation cited alleged non-compliance with the directions of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh regarding scientific management of municipal solid waste, besides provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Non-Biodegradable Material (Management, Handling and Disposal) Act, 2007, Solid Waste Management Rules, Plastic Waste Management Rules and the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.

CEL Director Qadri alleged
Continued on
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PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that Mr. Bilal Ahmad Dar, son of Mr. Mohammad Yousuf Dar, resident of Zainakote, HMT, Srinagar, passed away on 27 June 2026 after a prolonged illness.

If any person, individual, organization, or authority has any objection, claim, or concern regarding the publication of this death notice or any matter connected thereto, they are requested to submit the same in writing, along with supporting documents, to the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice.

If no objection is received within the stipulated period, it shall be presumed that no one has any objection, and the matter will be treated as finalized.

Sd/-
Legal Heirs / Family of Late Bilal

EDITORIAL

A Holistic Approach To Healing

A part from a health crisis, drug abuse is a social and economic challenge that eats away at the fabric of communities. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's emphasis on community participation as the cornerstone of rehabilitation is a welcome and much-needed shift in perspective. The proposed Rehabilitation and Socio-Economic Reintegration Scheme, with its structured three-year cycle of treatment, livelihood activation, and sustained monitoring, represents a comprehensive and humane

approach to a problem that has long been treated with reactive measures rather than sustainable solutions. The scheme's phased structure - from medical treatment and counselling to skill development, employment, and long-term social inclusion - recognises that recovery is not a single event but a journey. The inclusion of Individual Rehabilitation Plans, a dedicated Rehabilitation Monitoring Portal for transparent case management, and the involvement of trained women volunteers and motivated government employees

reflects an understanding that rehabilitation requires coordinated, multi-departmental intervention. What makes this initiative particularly commendable is its focus on pilot implementation in the two most affected districts - one from each division - before scaling up. This approach allows for real-time learning, course correction, and evidence-based decision-making, ensuring that the scheme is not merely a policy document but a living, evolving framework that adapts to ground realities. The emphasis on community

participation is especially significant. Drug abuse victims often face stigma and isolation, making reintegration into society one of the most difficult phases of recovery. By involving volunteers, community members, and trained women's groups in counselling and rehabilitation efforts, the scheme seeks to break down these barriers and create an environment of acceptance and support. It also recognises that the family and community are not just beneficiaries but active partners in the healing process. The government

must ensure that the scheme is implemented with sincerity and vigour, that inter-departmental coordination remains seamless, and that the Rehabilitation Monitoring Portal becomes a tool for genuine accountability rather than a bureaucratic formality. The fight against drug abuse cannot be won by enforcement alone; it requires compassion, commitment, and collective effort. The groundwork has been laid. Now it is up to the administration, communities, and citizens to walk this path together.

On The Grand Road Of Puri: My Journey Of Faith And Devotion

Many prayers and hymns dedicated to Shree Jagannatha have been there in my memory since childhood. I felt happy singing the bhajans of Mahaprabhu Jagannatha while studying in school and college. I felt very close to Mahaprabhu. To this day, I hum the song composed by Bhakta Kabi Madhusudan Rao which reads: 'The Mahaprabhu is with me day and night; with this remembrance, I shall always worship Him with all my heart.'



Droupadi Murmu

Many prayers and hymns dedicated to Shree Jagannatha have been there in my memory since childhood. I felt happy singing the bhajans of Mahaprabhu Jagannatha while studying in school and college. I felt very close to Mahaprabhu. I do not sing the bhajans these days, But I do remember Mahaprabhu and hum his bhajans every day. I always feel the presence of Mahaprabhu near me. He supports me in difficult times. To this day, I hum the song composed by Bhakta Kabi Madhusudan Rao which reads: 'The Mahaprabhu is with me day and night; with this remembrance, I shall always worship Him with all my heart.'

By the time I reached an age when I could somewhat understand worldly things, I had come to realise the greatness of Mahaprabhu Jagannatha. At home, there were frequent discussions about Mahaprabhu Jagannatha. Such discussions

often took place in our village too. When I studied at the village school, the prayer 'Ahe Nila Shaila' written by Bhakta Salbeg was regularly recited. Our teacher used to tell us a lot about Mahaprabhu Jagannatha: There is a huge temple in Puri, and no other temple is as magnificent as that! In the temple, Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannatha is worshiped along with his sister Subhadra and elder brother Balabhadra. Mahaprabhu Jagannatha has dark colour and round eyes. Subhadra's complexion is yellow and Balabhadra is white like a moonlit flower. Once you see the deities, you can never forget them. Our teacher also used to say, Jagannatha is the 'Mahaprabhu', his prasad is 'Mahaprasada', His temple is the 'Bada Deula' or Big Temple, His path is the 'Bada Danda', that is, Grand Road, and His sea is the 'Mahodadhi' or the Great Ocean. Purushottam Kshetra, Puri is far from my native village, Uparbeda in Mayurbhanj district. How would I get an opportunity to visit Puri? As I grew up, I went to Bhubaneswar and got myself enrolled as a student in Unit-2 Girls High School. I started staying in the hostel there. Then I got a chance to visit Puri, Bhubaneswar, and Konark. The memory of my first darshan of Mahaprabhu Jagannatha is still vivid in my memory. What an impressive temple, such grand deities! Can these ever be forgotten?

Can anyone forget the Ratha Yatra of Mahaprabhu Jagannatha? Thirteen festivals are said to be celebrated during the twelve months of a year in Shree-Kshetra. But the

splendour of the Ratha Yatra is unique. Devotees throng the temple all through the year to have darshan of Mahaprabhu. But once a year, Mahaprabhu Himself leaves the temple and proceeds to the Gundicha temple along the Vishal Path, giving darshan to His devotees. On three magnificent chariots, the three Deities, accompanied by Chakraraja Sudarshana, visit the Gundicha temple. They stay there for seven days and then return. This grand festival of Mahaprabhu is incomparable.

Since my childhood, I have been a devotee of Mahaprabhu Jagannatha. He has always been my most revered Deity. He governs the ups and downs of my life. He is the fountain-head of my joys and sorrows. I have endured many hardships in my life. And Mahaprabhu has always pulled me out of all those troubles. I am His daughter, after all.

When my candidature for the post of the President of India was announced, I reverentially remembered the name of Mahaprabhu. I prayed to the Mahaprabhu, 'You are taking me to such lofty heights. I implore You to guide me at every step and always be with me.' He listened to my prayer. He always responds to my prayers. The festival of Ratha Yatra was going to be celebrated when I had to stay in Delhi as a candidate for the post of the President. So, it was not possible for me to go to Puri. Early morning, on the day of Ratha Yatra, I went to Shree Jagannatha Temple at Hauz Khas, Delhi, and had the darshan of Mahaprabhu. My heart was filled with joy. He showered

His blessings upon me. Full of confidence, I filed my nomination paper. I participated in the election campaign with great enthusiasm. I was praying to Mahaprabhu Jagannath, on my way to the Central Hall of Parliament for taking oath as the President on 25th July 2022. With His blessings, the ceremony went off very well. At the time of my inaugural address as President, it felt as if He was right there with me.

However, my heart longed to go to Puri to have the darshan of Mahaprabhu. Days went by, but I could not go to Puri. It occurred to me; how can anyone get His darshan unless He grants it! I silently prayed Him, 'If I have done anything wrong, forgive me, Mahaprabhu! But kindly call me to Puri, grant me Your darshan.' He is the Mahaprabhu of 'Bhaav' or emotions. How could He not understand my emotions? Soon, a tour to Puri was scheduled. The date was November 10, 2022. After arriving at Puri, the arcade proceeded towards the Shree Mandir. As the carcade reached Puri's Bada Danda, an extraordinary feeling overwhelmed me. The Bada Danda belongs to Shree Jagannatha. Is there any protocol required here? Puri is famous as Kshetra-Raj, the King of all the places of pilgrimage. Mahaprabhu is the God of Gods. Without any further thoughts, I got my car stopped. When my car stopped, all the cars following mine also came to a halt. Before anyone could comprehend what was happening, I had begun walking barefoot on the Bada Danda. The Shree Mandir was about two

kilometers away. Keeping my eyes focused on the temple's Neel-Chakra and the sacred Patit Paawan Dhvaj on the Shikhar, I kept walking ahead.

As I walked, I also kept greeting the children, women, the young and the elderly gathered on both sides of the road. My attention was on Mahaprabhu. The moment I reached near Sinh-Dwaar, the Lion-Gate of the temple, I could not stay still. By then, I had forgotten myself. Lying prostrate in the dust of the Bada Danda, the sacred road, I offered my humble Pranam to Mahaprabhu. Then I entered the temple. Upon reaching the Garbh-Griha and having darshan of the four deities, I was overwhelmed with divine bliss. Mahaprabhu is the protector of the universe. He is the saviour of those forsaken by everyone. He is always there to alleviate the sorrows of the people of the entire world. That is why the lids of His round eyes never blink. For Him, there is no distinction between high and low. In His eyes all are equal and equality of all is His mantra. Blessed with His compassion, I have devoted myself to the service of every section of the society. Looking at Mahaprabhu Jagannatha, the one with the rounded eyes, I folded my hands in reverence and prayed, 'May Your blessings forever sustain my spirit of dedication to the service of the people, O Mahabahu! Provide your kind protection to our country the entire world, O Kripanidhi.' Saying this, I found myself immersed into Bhakti-Bhav.

The writer is the President of India

How Football Breeds Tribalism

As the FIFA World Cup enters its closing stages and the arguments flow fast and thick as fevered as the football itself, one question intrigues me with increasing insistence

Sayantan Nandi

As the FIFA World Cup enters its closing stages and the arguments flow fast and thick as fevered as the football itself, one question intrigues me with increasing insistence. Why do certain players and teams provoke emotions that seem to far exceed the game? Why do they inspire not merely admiration or disappointment - the natural companions of sport - but also an intensity of resentment that often appears strangely detached from what actually happens on the football field? In many of these debates, football takes a back seat.

England inevitably gets labelled as a symbol of colonialism. Argentina becomes entangled in contemporary geopolitics. Lionel Messi becomes the favourite whipping boy, dismissed as overrated or underserving despite repeatedly demonstrating his impossible brilliance. Some of these views spring from sincerely held political convictions; others reflect genuine differences in aesthetic taste. Most of them seldom explain the emotional force of the hostility. While trying to figure out an explanation for this behaviour, I think the best place to begin is with ourselves.

Half a century of psychological research points in an intriguing direction. In one of the most influential experiments in social psychology, conducted by Henri Tajfel, volunteers divided into entirely arbitrary groups quickly began favouring their own side, despite sharing no meaningful differences. It took remarkably little for "us" and "them" to emerge. Football, of course, has never needed such artificial divisions. It inherited them generations ago. The



anthem is rolling around the stadium. The collective intake of breath before a decisive penalty.

By then, the match had already become something more than a game. Somewhere between childhood and adulthood, a club or a national team slips quietly into our emotional vocabulary. We celebrate victories we played no part in securing and mourn defeats suffered by people we have never met. Eleven strangers become an extension of ourselves. Nothing in football is ever only football. Once that happens, another individual's or team's success is rarely neutral. This is where greatness acquires an unexpected burden. Football promises uncertainty. It thrives on the possibility that today's underdog may humble yesterday's champion. Yet ever so often, a player arrives whose brilliance proves unnervingly durable.

What ought to inspire uncomplicated admiration often produces something more conflicted. Behavioural science has long shown that we understand ourselves through comparison. Most of those comparisons pass unnoticed because they occur among equals. Exceptional greatness is different. It quietly alters the scale, and the standards begin to shift. Before long, a merely excellent performance is greeted with disappointment because excellence has become routine. That may be the hidden price of genius. Football exposes this behaviour with remarkable clarity. Once we have reached a verdict, we instinctively begin collecting evidence to defend it.

This is perhaps what eminent psychologist Daniel Kahneman refers to as WYSIATI (What You See Is All There Is). The supporter who believes that Messi is overrated notices every misplaced pass as an affirmation

of his conviction. His disguised through-ball that unlocks a defence, the first touch that is almost invisible, the subtle change of rhythm that creates space where none appeared to exist and the sublime goal-scoring get subconsciously glossed over. The digital age has simply amplified these instincts. Every contentious tackle, disputed penalty and every stunning goal now lives several lives: first on the pitch, then on television, and finally in the endless courtroom of social media. There, certainty travels faster than curiosity.

Algorithms reward conviction more generously than reflection. To defend a celebrated player is to join one tribe; to dismiss him can become a badge of independence. Before long, opinions harden into identities, and changing one's mind begins to feel like changing sides. Politics adds another layer. National teams inevitably carry histories that stretch far beyond sport. These are real, and they deserve neither dismissal nor simplification. Yet once a football team becomes a symbol, every tackle and every trophy begins to absorb meanings that tactics and statistics alone can never explain.

The French thinker René Girard observed that rivals often become bound together by the intensity of their opposition. They define themselves against one another until the rivalry becomes part of their identity. Spend a few minutes reading debates about Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, or about England and Argentina, and the pattern becomes unmistakable. The participants often have more in common than either side would care to admit. Their emotional investment is identical; only the direction of their loyalty differs. Perhaps this is inevitable. Football occupies a unique place in

modern life because it is at once intensely personal and profoundly communal.

Millions watch the same match, yet no two people carry away quite the same memory. One recalls the missed chance. One cannot forget the referee's decision. A third remembers only the first touch that changed the rhythm of the game. That may explain why the fiercest football arguments are never settled by goals, trophies or statistics. Those things illuminate performance, but they cannot fully explain attachment. The deeper argument concerns identity, memory, loyalty and the quiet ways in which we seek ourselves in the triumphs and disappointments of others.

The greatest footballers become more than athletes, just as the greatest teams become more than collections of players. They become symbols on which entire generations project hope, grievance, pride and longing. Their brilliance does not simply illuminate the game; it illuminates the people watching it. The referee blows for full time. Around the world, millions have watched the same ninety minutes.

One supporter leaves exhilarated, another resentful, a third is already composing an indignant post online. Curiously, each believes the match has confirmed what he knew all along. The ball has travelled only one path across the grass. Our minds have travelled many more. Perhaps that is football's greatest mystery. Not why greatness divides us, but why it so faithfully reveals who we already are.

The writer is a former CEO and independent commentator on socio-cultural issues. Courtesy: The Statesman

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

Owner & Editor, Printer, Publisher: Nasir Azam Khan, Published From Beehama Ganderbal, Printed at K.T Press Pvt. Ltd 120-Electronic Complex, Industries Estate, Rangreth, RNI NO:-JKENG-2010/39938, Email:- Kashmirthunder123@gmail.com, Website: Kashmirthunder.com, Mobile: 9906797575, 9419006285

Preparations for upcoming Chinara Book Festival 2026 reviewed

DC Srinagar stresses on coordinated efforts for successful conduct of literary festival

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JULY 15: To ensure successful conduct of the 3rd edition of upcoming "Chinar Book Festival" scheduled from July 18 to July 26, 2026, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo chaired a comprehensive meeting here on Wednesday at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex.

The nine-day event, as per an official statement, is organised jointly by the National Book Trust (NBT) and the National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL).

The Book Festival is being organized through the collaborative efforts of the National Book Trust, India (Ministry of Education, Govt of India), National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL) and the District Administration Srinagar at Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC).

At the outset, the DC reviewed the detailed arrangements and preparations being put in place for the literary festival ensuring that the literary festival is organized in a well coordinated manner and



provide an engaging platform for readers, authors, publishers, artists, and students from across the country, while promoting a vibrant reading culture and encouraging greater participation among literary enthusiasts.

On the occasion, the DC stressed timely coordination among line departments, particularly regarding participant mobilization, transportation,

sanitation, etc to ensure the seamless and smooth conduct of the literary festival. He highlighted the festival's potential to inspire youth towards reading, writing, and cultural engagement, while also promoting Jammu & Kashmir's rich literary heritage on a global stage.

During the meeting, it was informed that the 2026 edition of the Chinar Book Festival is expected to offer a rich tapestry

of book launches, author meet-and-greets, panel discussions, poetry recitations and storytelling sessions. In addition, the festival will showcase local literary talent, children's activities, cultural performances and workshops aimed at promoting reading and writing among youth.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, Aadil Fareed, Additional Secretary Culture Academy, Adeel Saleem, Joint commissioner SMC, Nuzhat Khurshid, SP Headquarter, Umar Shah, Additional CEO SCCL, Suhail ul Islam, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Programme Officer ICDS, Bureeda Majid, Officers from Higher Education, School Education, Principles of Government Polytechnic Colleges & Industrial Training Institutes, Medical Superintendents, Executive Engineers, concerned District Officers and others.

Chief Convenor Chinar Book Festival, Amit Wanchoo, Coordinator National Book Trust, Shobha Kapoor and other concerned also participated in the meeting.

DC Kulgam presides over public outreach programme in Frisal

KT News Desk

KULGAM, JULY 15: Under the Public Outreach Initiative aimed at taking governance to the doorsteps of the people, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, Wednesday visited Frisal and presided over a Public Outreach Programme to hear the grievances and developmental demands of the local population.

During the programme, residents of Frisal and adjoining areas, as per an official statement, projected several public issues and developmental demands. These included upgradation of the Primary Health Centre (PHC), proper solid waste management, repair and restoration of street lights in the market, establishment of Fire & Emergency Services Station, desilting of Lakki Kul, construction of a footbridge over Badi Kul to facilitate farmers' access to their agricultural land, strengthening of flood protection bunds, construction and macadamization of link roads, enhancement of PHH/BPL ration quota, ensuring adequate and uninterrupted irrigation water through canals, provision of filtered drinking water, and deployment of doctors at



Kujjar Hospital and other developmental requirements of the area.

During the interaction, officers of the concerned departments also briefed the gathering on the issues raised and informed them about the measures being taken for their resolution.

The Deputy Commissioner patiently listened to all the grievances and demands and assured the public that every genuine issue would be examined and taken up with the concerned departments for timely redressal.

He directed the officers to address issues falling within their jurisdiction on priority and ensure prompt follow-up and effective implementation of decisions.

Emphasizing the importance of sanitation, the Deputy Commissioner instructed the concerned authorities to ensure proper collection and scientific disposal of solid waste.

He added that the Public Outreach Initiative is aimed at strengthening people-centric governance by promoting direct interaction with citizens, ensuring transparency, accountability and the timely delivery of public services.

The programme was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Viqar Ahmed Giri, JDP, ACD and other district and sectoral officers and a large number of local residents.

Later, the DC inaugurated a volleyball tournament at Badroo held under Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan.

DIET Doda concludes 2-day capacity building programme for SEVs



KT News Desk

DODA, JULY 15: The two-day Capacity Building Programme for Seasonal Educational Volunteers (SEVs), Phase I, organised by District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Doda under the UT Budget 2026-27, concluded at the ICT Lab, DIET Doda.

The programme, as per an official statement, conducted from 13 to 14 July 2026, aimed at enhancing the pedagogical skills and teaching competencies of Seasonal Educational Volunteers engaged in seasonal schools. During the two-day training, participants were oriented on innovative teaching methodologies, learner-centric approaches and effective classroom management practices aligned with the objectives of

NEP 2020.

DIET Doda Principal Rajesh Kumar supervised the programme and called for continuous professional development of educators to ensure quality education in remote and seasonal schooling setups.

Chief Education Officer Doda Bhushan Kumar Pathak graced the valedictory function as chief guest. He appreciated the efforts of DIET Doda in organising the programme and highlighted the role of SEVs in ensuring educational access in challenging terrain and encouraged participants to utilise the knowledge gained in their respective schools.

The chief guest distributed participation certificates among the trainees and lauded their commitment towards strengthening the education system.

DDC Doda hears public grievances at Gundna Directs prompt action on key development issues

KT News Desk

DODA, JULY 15: District Administration Doda Wednesday organised a Block Diwas-cum-Public Outreach Programme at Gundna, Block Gundana, providing residents a platform to interact with the administration on development and public welfare issues.

District Development Commissioner Doda Krishan Lal chaired the programme, which was attended by senior district and sectoral officers, PRI representatives and a large gathering of local residents.

During the interaction, residents, as per an official statement, raised concerns spanning road connectivity and safety, school infrastructure and staffing, electricity supply, health facilities, drinking water and irrigation, MGNREGA and labour welfare, sanitation, agriculture support and pending welfare cases.

Responding to the grievances, the DDC directed the PMGSY Department to expedite road repair and drainage works



and the Health Department to improve hygiene, ensure availability of medicines and prioritise healthcare in far-flung areas. The School Education Department informed that additional classrooms and school upgradation proposals were under process. The Power Development Department said new electricity lines and pole-replacement works were already under way, with the DDC directing early completion.

The Agriculture Department, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Tehsil Supply Officer and Labour Department were directed to step up awareness programmes, survey welfare beneficiaries, ensure regular

functioning of Fair Price Shops and expedite renewal of labour cards respectively, while pending marriage assistance cases were ordered to be cleared on priority.

Assistant Commissioner Development Doda urged the public to participate actively in MGNREGA by submitting genuine demands for development works.

Addressing the gathering, the District Development Commissioner reaffirmed the administration's commitment to development through public participation and said regular review meetings are being held to address electricity and other service-related issues, with priority for remote areas.

Awareness programme held on Dowry Prohibition Act in Dewal

KT News Desk

REASI, JULY 15: Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) of Legal Aid Clinic (LAC) Dewal, TLSC Mahore, Wednesday organised an awareness programme on the Dowry Prohibition Act at Dewal, under the guidance of District Legal Services

Authority (DLSA) Reasi Chairman Khalil Choudhary (also Principal District and Sessions Judge, Reasi) and DLSA Reasi Secretary Pooja Gupta.

The programme, as per an official statement, aimed to create awareness among local residents about the harmful social practice of dowry and

the legal provisions enacted to prohibit it. The PLVs sensitised participants about the provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, highlighting that the giving, taking or demanding of dowry is a punishable offence. Participants were informed about the legal rights and remedies available to women facing

dowry-related harassment and domestic violence. The PLVs emphasised the importance of promoting gender equality, dignity of women and marriages free from the practice of dowry.

Attendees were also made aware of the free legal aid services available through DLSA and TLSC and the functioning

of Legal Aid Clinics and were encouraged to approach Legal Services Institutions for assistance whenever required. The programme saw active participation from the local community, who appreciated the efforts of the Legal Services Authorities in spreading legal awareness on this important social issue.

DC Poonch visits high-density apple orchard in Loran

Reviews progress under government scheme

KT News Desk

POONCH, JULY 15: Deputy Commissioner Poonch Ashok Kumar Sharma, accompanied by Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) Poonch, Tehsildar Mandi and SHO Loran visited the Revised Modified High-Density Apple Orchard at Tantraygam, Loran, Tehsil Mandi.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the orchard established under the Revised Modified High-Density Apple Plantation Scheme. The orchard has been developed at an estimated cost of 8 lakh, with 50% government financial assistance (4 lakh) provided under the scheme.

The initiative aims to promote modern high-density apple cultivation, improve horticultural productivity and enhance farmers' income and livelihood.

DLSA Udhampur holds 3rd Under Trial Review Committee meeting

KT News Desk

UDHAMPUR, JULY 15: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Udhampur, under the guidance of DLSA Udhampur Chairman Kalpana Revo (Principal District and Sessions Judge) and supervision of DLSA Udhampur Secretary Sumati Sharma (Sub Judge), Wednesday held the 3rd Under Trial Review Committee meeting, 2026, at the Conference Hall, District Court Complex Udhampur, to evaluate cases of under-trial prisoners and ensure compliance with legal safeguards and timely justice.

The committee reviewed cases based on Supreme Court guidelines and NALSA SOPs, focusing on prisoners with no proper representation or those

who have spent substantial time in custody and recommended release of eligible prisoners by filing bail applications before appropriate courts to ensure the benefits of legal provisions reach intended beneficiaries. The meeting also decided on regular follow-up meetings, maintaining a consolidated data sheet to monitor prisoner cases and preparing quarterly reports.

Among those present were Deputy Commissioner Udhampur Minga Sherpa, Senior Superintendent of Police Udhampur Amritpal Singh, DLSA Udhampur Secretary Sumati Sharma, District Jail Udhampur Superintendent Mohd Irfan Khan and Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel Udhampur Pawan Gupta.

DC Rajouri inspects IWMP works in Doongi

Reviews water conservation measures

KT News Desk

RAJOURI, JULY 15: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma Wednesday inspected development works executed under the Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) in Block Doongi to review water conservation and soil management initiatives.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner inspected a check dam constructed at Ward No 06, Panchayat Doongi Brahmana. The project, completed during financial year 2026-27, was executed at a cost of 7.90 lakh against an estimated cost of 8 lakh.

Officials informed the Deputy Commissioner that the check dam is benefiting around 25 to 30 families by enhancing water availability for agriculture, reducing soil erosion, facilitating groundwater recharge and contributing to ecological sustainability of the area.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed the need for regular maintenance and optimum utilisation of watershed



infrastructure to ensure long-term benefits, noting that the IWMP is playing a significant role in conserving natural resources, improving agricultural productivity and strengthening water security. He directed officers concerned to ensure timely execution of watershed projects with a focus on quality, durability and community participation.

Among those present were Additional District Development Commissioner Malik Zada Sheraz Ul Haq, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat Mohd Rafeeq and Block Development Officer Doongi.

3rd Under Trial Review Committee meeting for 2026 held in Jammu

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JULY 15: The 3rd Under Trial Review Committee meeting for 2026 was held Wednesday at 3 pm in the Office Chamber of the Principal District & Sessions Judge/Chairman, DLSA Jammu. The meeting was chaired by Principal District & Sessions Judge/Chairman DLSA Jammu, R.N. Watal.

During the meeting, cases of Under Trial Prisoners falling under various categories of UTRC were reviewed. Discussions covered the status of cases, pendency, possibility of release on bail, expeditious disposal and provision of free legal aid to eligible inmates. The Committee reviewed cases eligible for release under Section 479 BNSS and other categories as per NALSA guidelines. Officers concerned were directed to ensure coordination for early disposal of pending cases and provide legal assistance to under-trial inmates.

Among those present were DLSA Jammu Secretary Maleeka Sharma (Civil Judge Sr Division), Additional Deputy Commissioner Jammu Anusya Jamalwal, Senior Superintendent of Police Jammu Joginder Singh, Central Jail Kot Bhalwal Superintendent Chhabil Singh, District Jail Amphalla Superintendent Dhaminder Singh and Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel Jammu Adv Anil Sharma.

Political, social leaders pay tributes to Sheikh Mustafa Kamal

Delegations from J&K, Ladakh visit Abdullah family residence

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jul 15: Condolence meetings continued on Thursday following the demise of Jammu & Kashmir National Conference Additional General Secretary and former minister Dr Sheikh Mustafa Kamal.

Delegations representing different sections of society from across Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh visited Dr Mustafa Kamal's residence at M.A. Road, Srinagar, where they conveyed their heartfelt condolences to National Conference President Dr Farooq Abdullah, Vice President and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and other members of the Abdullah family. They expressed profound grief over Dr Kamal's passing and offered prayers for the eternal peace of his soul.

Those who called on the bereaved family included senior National Conference leaders, Cabinet Ministers, Members of the Legislative Assembly, former legislators, leaders of various political parties, opposition leaders, social activists, prominent religious scholars, members of the business community, lawyers, representatives of civil society, party office-bearers, workers and people from all walks of life. The visiting delegations



paid glowing tributes to the late leader's lifelong political struggle, unwavering commitment to public service and steadfast adherence to principles, while expressing solidarity with the bereaved family during this difficult time.

Throughout the day, special prayers, recitation of the Holy Qur'an and Fateha Khawani were held for the departed soul. Religious scholars spoke on the philosophy of life and death, the virtues of patience and perseverance and emphasized that a person's righteous deeds continue to keep his legacy alive. They prayed for the elevation of Dr Kamal's ranks in the Hereafter.

Political, social and religious leaders described Dr Sheikh Mustafa Kamal as a dignified, principled, sincere and fearless statesman who devoted his

entire life to public service, democratic values, truth and justice. They recalled his humility, compassion for the poor, exemplary character, wisdom, foresight, patience and unwavering commitment to the people, saying that his life would continue to inspire future generations.

The speakers also recalled that during the imprisonment of Sher-e-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Dr Sheikh Mustafa Kamal endured severe hardships, imprisonment and torture, yet never wavered from the National Conference's principles, ideological commitments or his steadfast belief in truth and justice. His courage, integrity and unwavering dedication to the people remained the defining features of his public life.

National Conference President and elder brother of the

deceased, Dr Farooq Abdullah, expressed his heartfelt gratitude to all those who visited to offer condolences, attended the funeral prayers, and participated in the burial and last rites. He thanked political leaders, social and religious organisations, party workers and members of the public for standing by the family in its hour of grief.

Dr Farooq Abdullah said that death is an undeniable reality from which no human being can escape, and that submitting to the will of Almighty Allah is the hallmark of a true believer. He described Dr Sheikh Mustafa Kamal's demise as an irreparable loss not only for the Abdullah family but also for the Jammu & Kashmir National Conference and the people of the region. He said that the late leader dedicated his entire life to serving the people, strengthening the party and upholding its ideals, and that his services, sacrifices and legacy would always be remembered with deep respect.

It may be recalled that Ijtimai Fateha Khawani for the late Dr Sheikh Mustafa Kamal will be held on Friday at 10:00 a.m. at his graveyard located on Gupkar Road, Sonwar, adjacent to Kashmir Nursing Home, where relatives, party leaders, workers, well-wishers and members of the public are expected to participate and offer

Kupwara top list of Lakhpati Didis in J&K: MD Mission Yuva

Says DPRs planned to expand livelihoods; bank branches delaying sanctions to face probe

Waris Fayaz

Kupwara, Jul 15: Managing Director Mission Yuva Harvinder Singh on Wednesday said that Kupwara District has the highest number of Lakhpati Didis in Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking after a review meeting of Mission Yuva here, MD Harvinder Singh, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said the meeting focussed on assessing applications, resolving bottlenecks, ensuring bank linkages and helping beneficiaries establish sustainable units. "Kupwara is a border district with remote areas like Karnah and other far-flung villages where youth need support to turn their ideas into successful enterprises and generate employment," he said. Singh said the district administration was doing commendable work in implementing Mission Yuva and highlighted the achievements of women associated with the Lakhpati Didi initiative.

"We have decided that the talent pool of Lakhpati Didis in Kupwara will be supported through specific DPRs so that their work can be taken forward under Mission Yuva," he said.

On the status of applications under the scheme, Singh said issues related to pending cases



and bank sanctions were being reviewed, adding that Mission Yuva has stopped the practice of outright rejection of applications. "Cases facing issues like low CIBIL scores or existing loans are placed under a dormancy period," the MD said.

"If an applicant does not get a loan today due to a CIBIL issue, it does not mean the person will not be eligible later. Such cases are kept under dormancy and reviewed after the required period," he said.

Singh acknowledged concerns regarding delays in bank sanctions and said directions have been issued to J&K Bank to

improve the process.

"Any bank branch found not performing properly in processing Mission Yuva applications will face an investigation," he said.

He added that the department is also monitoring beneficiaries who have received approval or loan disbursement but require further support to run their units successfully.

"Our finance experts, enterprise development experts and marketing experts will work together to make Mission Yuva more effective and ensure that employment opportunities in remote areas are taken forward," Singh said.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Showcase Jammu;

devotees of Baba Barfani.

He also emphasised showcasing Jammu and directed officials to organize sightseeing tours to Jammu Division's key spiritual and tourism spots, while actively promoting local handicraft and handloom products.

"It is our goal that whenever Baba Amarnath pilgrims return home, they should carry a piece of Jammu with them in the form of beautiful local handmade products and unforgettable memories. Together, we resolve to make this year's Yatra truly historic," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also reviewed the deployment of Food Safety Officers at community kitchens, facilities at reception and lodge centres, on-spot registrations of pilgrims, transportation and security arrangements.

He directed the officials to optimize manpower deployment to seamlessly manage the heavy influx of devotees throughout the yatra.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasized that officials must closely monitor Meteorological Department's predictions and remain alert to any weather vagaries.

Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar informed about the legal action initiated against the individuals caught engaged in fraudulent practices. The Lieutenant Governor further directed that administrative and legal measures be taken against any official found involved in misconduct.

The Lieutenant Governor also interacted with the devotees of and wished them a safe, peaceful and blessed pilgrimage.

The Lieutenant Governor was accompanied by Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu; Bhim Sen Tuti, IGP Jammu; Amol V Homkar, IGP CRPF Jammu Sector; Dr Rakesh Minhas, Deputy Commissioner Jammu; Dr. Devansh Yadav, Municipal Commissioner Jammu and senior officials from civil administration, police and security forces. (KNO)

3.24 lakh pilgrims

motor vehicles (MMVs) and 59 light motor vehicles (LMVs).

The batch included 4,439 men, 1,614 women, 13 children, 78 sadhus, 53 sadhvis, one child sadhu, three transgender pilgrims and 50 foreign male devotees.

The Baltal-bound convoy departed at 2:42 am, while the Pahalgam-bound convoy left at 3:27 am under elaborate security arrangements.

The total number of pilgrims who have departed from the Bhagwati Nagar base camp in Jammu since the commencement of departures on July 2 has reached 99,287, inching closer to the one-lakh mark.

Meanwhile, Director General (DG), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Praveer Ranjan, accompanied by senior officers, visited Jammu to review the security arrangements for the on-going Amarnath Yatra Yatra-2026.

The visit included a comprehensive assessment of security measures, medical response mechanisms, fire safety preparedness, pilgrim facilities, logistics and inter-agency coordination to ensure the safety, security and convenience of devotees.

During the visit, the DG inspected the Bhagwati Nagar Base Camp, Joint Police Control Room (JPCR), CCTV Control Room and the Tawi River Front. He also interacted with deployed personnel and pilgrims, reviewed the security framework on the ground and stressed the need for maintaining operational readiness, continuous vigilance and seamless coordination among all stakeholder agencies.

The DG CISF chaired a high-level security review meeting with senior officers of the CAPFs,

J&K Police, Intelligence Bureau, Indian Army and other stakeholder agencies. Commending the dedication, professionalism and seamless coordination among the security forces, he expressed confidence in their continued commitment towards ensuring the smooth, safe and incident-free conduct of the Amarnath Yatra-2026. (KNO)

Kashmir set for

the mercury likely to rise to 36-37°C, while similar conditions are expected across other plain areas of Kashmir.

For the Jammu region, the forecaster said no significant rise in daytime temperatures is expected as monsoon-like conditions are likely to continue.

The Met department has forecast partly cloudy skies with light to moderate rain or thundershowers at many places on July 18 and 19, with the possibility of brief intense heavy showers at isolated places in the Jammu division during the late night of July 18 and the morning of July 19.

Between July 20 and 23, the weather is expected to remain generally cloudy with light to moderate rain or thundershowers at most places, with peak rainfall activity on July 21 and 22. Heavy rain or brief intense showers are also likely at a few districts in both the Kashmir and Jammu divisions.

The weather office has advised that heavy rainfall, flash floods, landslides, mudslides in vulnerable areas of the Chenab Valley, Pir Panjal Range and some hilly areas of Kashmir, along with waterlogging in low-lying areas, are possible between July 20 and 22.

Authorities have advised people, especially those living in vulnerable areas, to remain alert and follow official weather advisories. (KNO)

Man dies after

town when a boulder rolled down from a hillside and struck his vehicle near Trishul Morh.

He said the man was immediately rescued from the vehicle and shifted to the District Hospital Ramban, where doctors declared him brought dead.

The deceased was later identified as Mohammad Iqbal Tantray, a resident of Seri village in Ramban district.

Police have taken cognisance of the incident and initiated further investigation. (KNO)

NC to leave

plan ready.

"We know how to remain patient. We will wait, but we will also keep our alternate plan ready," he added.

Omar said he had already directed party leaders to leave for New Delhi on July 19, regardless of whether permission is granted.

"I have told my colleagues that we will definitely go to Delhi on July 19. If we are not given permission to hold the protest at Jantar Mantar, we will sit together there and decide our next course of action. But we will certainly go to Delhi," he said.

Recalling the final days of his uncle, Dr Mustafa Kamal, who passed away on Tuesday, Abdullah said that the late NC leader's health deteriorated on July 11 and doctors had indicated his condition was critical.

"Even at that time, (National Conference president) Dr Farooq Abdullah instructed us that whatever happened, we had to continue with our Jammu programme on July 12. If we did not cancel that programme, there is no question of cancelling the July 20 protest," he said.

The Chief Minister termed the demise of Dr Kamal as a personal loss for the Abdullah family and the National Conference. "For our family,

this is a very difficult time. Apart from being my father's younger brother, Mustafa Kamal dedicated his life to serving the poor," he said.

He recalled that Dr Kamal continued to run a free medical clinic in Tangmar even while serving as Health Minister. "He (Dr Kamal) served as an MLC before being elected to the Assembly from Tangmar twice, later winning from Pattan in a by-election and representing Hazratbal in 2009," Omar said. "Seeing so many people gathered here today shows how many lives Mustafa Sahib touched. We are deeply grateful for his lifelong service." (KNO)

Kashmir opposition

PDP will not participate in the protest programme," they said, adding that the NC's invitation was discussed during the recent party meeting.

The party is yet to announce its decision on NC's invitation.

The Peoples Conference is also likely to turn down the NC's invitation to join the protests, with sources revealing that the party leadership is averse to participation in the programme.

The Awami Ittehad Party (AIP), led by MP, Er. Rashid, may also not participate in the protest programme. Talking to KNO, MLA Langate Sheikh Khurshed said the decision has been left to Er. Rashid. "The final call will be taken by AIP supremo. We have conveyed our stance to him, and he will take the final decision," he said.

Khurshed further recalled that the AIP had advised the NC at the time of government formation in October 2024 not to take oath until the restoration of statehood. (KNO)

Artificial Intelligence

remain timeless, and it is imperative that the younger generation emulate his thoughts and values, channeling them into the noble task of nation building.

The Lieutenant Governor said that AI has changed the way we educate and hire the workforce and it has fundamentally reshaped the job market, defining the economic landscape of our era.

He said there are moments in history when human civilization enters a new age.

"The invention of the wheel, the development of printing, the steam engine, the discovery of electricity, the spread of computers and the internet, each of these changed the world. Today we stand on the threshold of a similar new era, and AI has already reached our homes, schools, hospitals, industries, farms and government systems. It has become part of our lives. Even in far flung villages, AI is changing lives. A local health worker can now run medical checkups, farmers get instant weather and crop advice, and students get top-quality lessons in their own language," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that a mature society should use modern and new technology like AI with sensitivity and keeping future requirements in mind. He said India has for centuries been the bearer of a shared heritage of knowledge, innovation and humanity and our country taught the world that science and ethics are not opposites but complements.

"So when AI brings new opportunities before us, our duty is not only to adopt it but also to guide it in the right direction. I firmly believe that when technology is used for human welfare, it democratizes opportunity. It brings possibilities to people who were previously deprived of them. That is why we should welcome this change. The need today is not to compare humans and machines. Rather, we must ensure that machines extend human

capabilities, not replace them.

History reminds us that every great leap forward brings a moment of friction. Just as society evolved past the scriptorium after the printing press and abandoned the hand-plow for the tractor, we cannot turn back the clock on Artificial Intelligence. AI represents our best path forward, not as a replacement for human potential, but as a force multiplier. By absorbing the friction of routine and repetitive tasks, AI would elevate our uniquely human strengths. The future belongs to a symbiotic partnership where technology handles the mechanics, allowing the human work force to focus on what truly matters," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that we must build a future where science becomes the means of progress and humanity determines its direction.

"Every technology revolution closes some doors but opens many new ones. The real challenge today is not about lack of opportunity but speed of change, making rapid reskilling our most urgent duty in various sectors. We should also be prepared to deal with challenges of AI-generated deepfakes which blurs the line between fact and fiction. Today, we also face an even deeper crisis that is the erosion of truth. For innovation to succeed, it must walk hand-in-hand with public trust. Citizens have a fundamental right to know where their information comes from. Today, in an AI dominated era, transparency is a necessity," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also called upon the young generation to grab the opportunity today and focus on problem solving and critical thinking with scientific temper.

"Today vast trove of knowledge is available in the palm of your hand. This is an extraordinary opportunity, and the future belongs to those who know how to use it to find solutions and who can work collaboratively with diverse ideas, and who have the courage to make ethical decisions. In the times ahead we must cultivate environments in our schools and universities where Science and Sanskar develop in balance. Along with technical competence, creativity, communication, empathy and responsibility should be given equal importance. I believe ultimately the society that progresses most will be the one that makes its young people skilled, capable and sensitive. Therefore, balance must be our path," the Lieutenant Governor added.

Padma Bhushan Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, President, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA); Prof Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu; members of Dr. Suresh Awasthi Smriti Nyas, distinguished speakers, academicians, eminent literary personalities and students participated in the lecture series through virtual mode. (KNO)

Inclusion of Bhairav

for Rajouri! The district's historic Bhairav Yatra has officially been added to National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of India. Congratulations to the Rajouri District Administration and the J&K's Department of Culture for turning this dream into a reality. This prestigious recognition will go a long way in documenting, preserving, and celebrating the area's deep spiritual and cultural roots. This national honor validates the generations of devotees who kept this tradition alive. The inclusion of Bhairav Yatra in National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage will strengthen Rajouri's unique cultural footprint on the national stage and it will open the door for research, cultural exchange, and sustainable heritage tourism." (KNO)

As Wular turns

water. Earlier it was clean and refreshing, but

now there is an unpleasant smell everywhere. Many women develop skin rashes after working in the lake," she said.

Their concerns have gained significance following a recent study published in the journal "Scientific Reports", which detected traces of heavy metals, including cadmium, chromium, nickel, zinc and iron, in edible water chestnuts collected from Wular and other major wetlands in Kashmir.

The researchers warned that increasing pollution in freshwater wetlands could pose risks to both aquatic ecosystems and human health, and recommended continuous environmental monitoring, improved wastewater treatment and stricter pollution-control measures.

For the women who depend on the lake for their livelihood, however, the changes have been visible for years.

"We don't need any scientific report to tell us that Wular is deteriorating," said Shareefa Begum, another harvester. "We see the water changing every season. We smell the pollution every day and feel it on our skin. Our livelihood is disappearing before our eyes."

The women said the shrinking harvest has made it increasingly difficult to support their families, with many returning home after hours of labour with only a fraction of what they once collected.

They also urged authorities to accelerate conservation efforts and involve local women, who spend months working inside the lake every year, in its restoration.

"We know this lake better than anyone because we live with it every day," one of the harvesters said. "If Wular dies, our work, our income and a tradition passed down through generations will disappear with it." (KNO)

'Don't Judge Kashmir

headlines," they said.

Having travelled to Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Aru Valley, Wular Lake and Jammu, the visitors said Aru Valley emerged as their favourite destination because of its peaceful surroundings and spectacular scenery.

The couple described Kashmiri hospitality as among the finest they have experienced anywhere in the world, saying several local families invited them into their homes for tea and conversations.

"The memories we will take back are not just of beautiful places but of the people we met. Their warmth and generosity made this journey unforgettable," they said.

They said they felt safe throughout their visit and found locals willing to help at every step. However, they expressed disappointment that many trekking routes and remote tourist destinations remained inaccessible.

"We wanted to explore more of Kashmir, especially places like Gurez Valley and other hiking destinations, but many of them were closed due to restrictions. We hope to return once they reopen because there is still so much of Kashmir left to discover," they said.

The visitors also praised Kashmiri cuisine, particularly the traditional Wazwan, calling it one of the highlights of their journey.

Describing Kashmir in three words, they said: "Hospitality, genuine and unforgettable."

The couple urged travellers, particularly those from Argentina and other parts of the world, to visit Kashmir with an open mind.

"Don't come only for the landscapes. Meet the people, learn about their culture and experience their hospitality. That's what truly makes Kashmir special," they said.

"If we could tell the world one thing after this visit, it would be this: don't judge Kashmir only by what you see in the news. Its true spirit lives in its people, culture and extraordinary landscapes," they added. (KNO)

India-UK trade pact comes into force



PTI

New Delhi, Jul 15: India and the UK on Wednesday operationalised a free trade agreement under which a host of domestic goods will enter the British market at zero duty.

A social security agreement too has been operationalised from July 15.

"With the coming into force of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and the Agreement on Social Security, our economic linkages are going to get even deeper," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a social media post.

The CETA will give fresh momentum to Indian farmers, entrepreneurs and MSMEs. Several vibrant sectors will gain stronger access to the UK market,

he said.

It will also deepen cooperation in technology, professional services and innovation, while supporting greater mobility for skilled Indian talent, he added.

The social security agreement will provide invaluable support to Indian professionals working temporarily in the UK and strengthen the competitiveness of Indian enterprises, the prime minister said.

"The agreement, which opens new avenues for trade, investment and innovation, will create unique opportunities for our businesses while further accelerating PM @NarendraModi ji's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047," Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said in a social media post.

PM says it will give fresh momentum to farmers, MSMEs



PTI

New Delhi, Jul 15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday termed the operationalisation of the India-United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Agreement on Social Security a significant moment in the bilateral ties.

He said the economic linkages between the two nations are going

to get even deeper and will translate the shared ambition into tangible opportunities for the people. Modi also said that the CETA will give a fresh momentum to farmers, entrepreneurs and MSMEs, besides several vibrant sectors will gain stronger access to the UK market.

He said it will also deepen cooperation in technology, professional services and innovation, while supporting greater

mobility for skilled Indian talent. "This is a significant moment in the India-United Kingdom partnership! With the coming into force of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and the Agreement on Social Security, our economic linkages are going to get even deeper. Together, these agreements translate our shared ambition into tangible opportunities for our people," he said in a post on 'X'.

Significant milestone: Vice President



PTI

New Delhi, Jul 15: Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Wednesday welcomed the operationalisation of the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), describing it as a significant milestone in the enduring partnership between the two countries.

He said the landmark achievement reflects India's growing economic strength and global engagement under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The free trade agreement between India and the

United Kingdom came into force on Wednesday and is set to unleash a flurry of tariff cuts that will catalyse bilateral trade through greater two-way movement of goods and services.

The CETA was signed in July last year.

"These agreements will significantly expand market access, strengthen trade and services, and facilitate greater mobility for professionals, creating new opportunities for our businesses, entrepreneurs, farmers, manufacturers, MSMEs, and skilled workforce," Radhakrishnan said in a social-media post.

SC flags 'frustration' of students in CBSE's digital marking system



Seeks Solicitor General's assistance

PTI

New Delhi, Jul 15: Expressing concern over students' "frustration" in CBSE's digital marking system, the Supreme Court on Wednesday sought the assistance of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta in hearing a PIL which sought directions to the Centre and the CBSE to frame regulations to conduct exams through on-screen marking (OSM) system.

The CBSE's OSM evaluation system is a digital grading method where

teachers assess scanned copies of physical answer sheets on a computer instead of checking physical paper scripts.

"Look at the amount of frustration of young children," a bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said and sought the assistance of the solicitor general in dealing with the case.

The bench, also comprising justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, said there appear to be systemic "creeping problems" in the digital evaluation process.

"We are seeking your assistance, not in an adversarial way. There are some problems," Justice Bagchi told the solicitor general and sought a status report

in the case.

The top law officer informed the bench that while individual marksheet discrepancies mentioned in the plea have largely been resolved, the government is taking the systemic issues seriously.

He said that a one-member commission, led by S Radha Chauhan, has been constituted to review the evaluation system and recommend necessary systemic changes.

"We are not taking this adversely," the SG said. He said the committee is already looking into the grievances.

The bench has now asked the solicitor general to apprise it of the steps being taken by the CBSE and listed the matter for further hearing next week.

The PIL has been filed by Rakesh Binjola through advocate Laxmikant Matadan Shukla.

The petition seeks directions to the Centre and the CBSE to frame regulations for conducting CBSE Board examinations through the OSM evaluation system and to constitute a high-powered committee to supervise and implement such reforms.

The petitioner has also sought directions to grant relaxation in minimum qualifying marks for students who have already secured provisional admissions or cleared entrance examinations, as well as exemption from the 75 per cent or other minimum Class 12 marks criteria prescribed for admission to various courses.

Congress playing 'false victim card' over Rahul Gandhi event venue: BJP



PTI

New Delhi, Jul 15: The BJP on Wednesday slammed the Congress over its claim that permission for party leader Rahul Gandhi's July 17 event at Dehradun's Parade Ground was revoked, alleging that several alternative venues have already been made available for the programme.

The remarks came after the Congress staged a sit-in at Parade Ground in Dehradun on Tuesday after the district administration cancelled permission for Gandhi's event, 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' (Voice of

Students), saying another programme is being held at the venue.

BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari alleged that the Congress is looking for an excuse as Gandhi is planning to go on another vacation.

"Stop playing the false victim card. Several additional venues have already been made available. It seems Rahul Gandhi wants to go on a vacation and is looking for an excuse to cancel his programme,"

"The country's Gen Z has already seen through the Congress party's lies," Bhandari said in a post on X.

No backdoor talks with BJP: Sule



PTI

Mumbai, Jul 15: NCP (SP) working president Supriya Sule on Wednesday dismissed speculation over meetings between her party leaders and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, saying there was no political strategy behind the interactions.

Addressing a press conference, Sule said senior party leader Jayant Patil had officially sought an appointment with Fadnavis to raise the issue of action taken against an NCP (SP) municipal council president.

"Jayant Patil officially sought time from the chief minister, went in his car and returned in his car. There was nothing secretive about the meeting. If you want to know who else met the chief minister at his residence, you should ask the chief minister, not

me," she said.

Meetings of leaders from the ruling NCP and NCP (SP) at 'Varsha', CM's official residence, late on Tuesday night have fuelled speculation about a change in political equations in Maharashtra.

The meetings come against the backdrop of Congress leader P Chidambaram's claim that the BJP is wooing the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) and the DMK to get their support for the 131st Constitution Amendment Bill, proposing to raise Lok Sabha seats to 850 and initiate delimitation in the Monsoon session of Parliament starting July 20.

Rejecting speculation about the NCP (SP) joining the ruling alliance, Sule said the media had been predicting her swearing-in and ministerial portfolio for the past 12 years.

Temple visit my 'personal right, not soft Hindutva', says Kerala CM

PTI

Thiruvananthapuram, Jul 15: Kerala Chief Minister V D Sathesnan on Wednesday rejected allegations of pursuing "soft Hindutva" over his recent visit to the Kollur Mookambika temple, asserting that his faith was a personal matter protected by the Constitution.

Responding to questions at a press conference here, Sathesnan said he has been visiting the Karnataka temple for the past 37 years and that branding him a "soft Hindutva" leader on that basis was baseless. "When I go to the Mookambika temple, it is my personal right. I have the constitutional right to believe in God. How can that be called soft Hindutva," he asked.

The chief minister said he had been visiting the shrine since the 1990s and described himself as a devotee of the presiding deity there.

"I have been going to Mookambika temple for the last 37 years. I am a devotee of Kollur Mookambika. I am very happy to say that," he said.

Complex surgery for rare lung malformation in infant marks new milestone for AIIMS Delhi

PTI

New Delhi, Jul 15: Doctors at AIIMS Delhi have successfully performed a rare and technically demanding lung-preserving surgery on a four-month-old infant born with a congenital lung malformation affecting both lungs, hospital authorities said.

The child was discharged just two days after the operation, they said. The procedure -- a segment-level lung resection or segmentectomy in an infant -- on one of the youngest patients is among the rarest reported cases of its kind and highlights the advanced paediatric surgical care available at the premier institute, authorities added.

The surgery was performed on the infant's right lung, while another one on the left lung will be scheduled after a few months, according to doctors.

The baby was diagnosed before



birth with congenital pulmonary airway malformation (CPAM), a condition in which part of the lung develops abnormally during pregnancy, forming cyst-like tissue that cannot function like healthy lung tissue.

Doctors said the case was particularly challenging because the malformation involved both lungs, unlike the more common presentation affecting only one lung.

Removing an entire lung lobe would have significantly reduced the child's future lung capacity, they said. The surgical team therefore opted for a lung-preserving approach by removing only the diseased segments from the right lung. Each lung is divided into smaller functional units called segments, each with its own airway and blood supply.

While removal of an entire lobe is relatively straightforward, segmentectomy requires meticulous dissection of deeply placed blood vessels and airways while preserving the surrounding healthy lung tissue.

In this case, surgeons removed segments 9 and 10 of the lower lobe of the right lung, considered among the most technically difficult lung segments to access because of their deeply situated blood vessels, the hospital statement said.

"Segments 9 and 10 are among the most difficult to remove in the entire lung, since their vessels and airway are buried deep within the tissue, far from the surface. Performing this safely through keyhole surgery in an infant just four months old is a significant technical achievement," Dr Sandeep Agarwala, Head, Department of Pediatric Surgery, AIIMS Delhi, said.

Intimidatory speech case TMC's Abhishek gives voice sample to magistrate at court

PTI

Kolkata, Jul 15: Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee on Wednesday provided his voice sample to a magistrate at the Bidhannagar SDJM court near here in connection with an investigation into his alleged intimidatory speech during the West Bengal assembly election campaign.

The Calcutta High Court had, on July 10, directed Banerjee to appear before the magistrate at noon on July 15 for the purpose.

Banerjee was at the court for nearly one-and-a-half hours for providing the voice sample to the magistrate, for which an expert was present.

He did not respond to queries from journalists present at the venue and left the court premises soon after the process concluded.

