



Nothing matches power of writing: LG Sinha

Says Chinar Book Festival has transformed into intellectual movement across J&K

Calls writers, thinkers glowing lamps, blooming roses



Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Jul 18: Stating that nothing matches the power of writing, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday called upon youth to develop the habit of reading to become good writers.

Addressing the third edition of Chinar Book Festival here, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said, “Nothing matches the power of writing. Combined with a strong imagination, it becomes a lasting strength. A vibrant book festival creates such environment and a welcoming space where literature becomes accessible, inspiring, and meaningful for everyone.”

The Lieutenant Governor congratulated the National Book Trust and the organizers

for their commendable work. “This festival is more than just an event. It is a movement to build a vibrant community of readers, writers, and thinkers. Our goal is to transform Jammu Kashmir into a national hub for knowledge, culture, and creativity. I hope this book festival will inspire the youth to read every day, protect endangered languages, and use literature as a way to value and respect diversity,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said that books are like living conversations and they force us to think deeply, ask questions, challenge what we believe, and inspire us to grow.

The Lieutenant Governor also stated that in a very short span of time, the Chinar Book Festival has become a unique celebration of ideas, transforming into a vibrant

intellectual movement across Jammu Kashmir.

“I believe writers and thinkers are like glowing lamps and blooming roses. In many ways, they mirror the majestic Chinar tree. In Kashmir, the Chinar is a living symbol of patience, beauty, and endurance. Writers and their books share this same lasting spirit, guiding human civilization through the ages. Together, we share the responsibility to restore Jammu Kashmir as a leading hub for education, literature, and youth empowerment,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

CHINAR BOOK FESTIVAL STRONG NATIONAL PLATFORM OF IDEAS EXCHANGE

The Lieutenant Governor observed that Chinar Book Festival has become a strong national | [More on P6](#)

LG to lead ‘Mulaqat’ interfaith dialogue in Baramulla today

Waris Fayaz

Baramulla, Jul 18: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha will lead ‘Mulaqat’, an interfaith dialogue initiative here in North Kashmir on Sunday.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the event is aimed at promoting peace,

harmony and mutual understanding among different sections of society. LG Sinha will attend the event at Dak Bunglow as the chief guest, with organisers stating that all necessary arrangements, including security preparations, have been finalised for the programme.

Chairman of the organising body, Wajahat Farooq, said the first edition | [More on P6](#)

Srinagar records season’s hottest day at 35.9°C, MeT forecasts widespread rainfall from today

Kupwara registers Kashmir's second-highest maximum at 35.6°C, Jammu touches 35°C

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Jul 18: Srinagar on Saturday recorded the hottest day of the season as the mercury climbed to 35.9 degrees Celsius, nearly six degrees above normal, even as the Meteorological Department forecast a significant shift in weather with widespread rainfall, thunderstorms and the possibility of heavy to very heavy showers across Jammu and Kashmir over the next five days.

According to the data accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the maximum temperature in the summer capital was 5.8 degrees Celsius above normal, making it the highest daytime temperature recorded so far this year. However, it remained below last year's peak of 37.4 degrees Celsius, recorded on July 6, 2025.

An official said that the prolonged spell of intense heat



continued across much of Kashmir, with several stations also recording temperatures well above seasonal averages. Kupwara registered 35.6 degrees Celsius, Ganderbal and Baramulla 34.5 degrees Celsius each, Shopian 34.4

degrees Celsius, Pulwama 33.4 degrees Celsius, Kokernag 33.1 degrees Celsius, Bandipora 32.7 degrees Celsius, Qazigund 32.6 degrees Celsius, while the famous hill resort of Gulmarg recorded 25.6 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu division, Jammu city recorded 35 degrees Celsius, Kathua 34.8 degrees Celsius, Poonch 33.9 degrees Celsius, Udhampur 31.8 degrees Celsius, Rajouri 31.1 degrees Celsius and Katra 31 degrees Celsius. | [More on P6](#)

Weather alert

Amarnath, Mata Vaishno Devi Yatras temporarily suspended

3.76 lakh pilgrims pay obeisance at holy cave shrine in 16 days

16,039 offer prayers on Saturday

17th batch of 3,632 pilgrims arrives in Kashmir

Umaisar Gull Ganie

Srinagar, Jul 18: The annual Amarnath Yatra continued on Saturday with 16,039 pilgrims paying obeisance at the holy cave shrine, taking the total number of pilgrims



to 3,76,779 since the pilgrimage commenced on July 3. However, amid inclement weather alert authorities suspended Amarnath and Mata Vaishno Devi Yatras temporarily as a precautionary measure.

According to official data

accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), those who offered prayers on Saturday included 11,785 male pilgrims, 3,527 female pilgrims, 235 children, 103 sadhus, 19 sadhvis, five transgender devotees and 365 security personnel. 3,632 PILGRIMS ARRIVE IN KASHMIR

Meanwhile, the 17th batch of 3,632 pilgrims left the Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in Jammu early Saturday under multi-layer security arrangements and arrived in Kashmir.

Officials said the Baltal-bound convoy, | [More on P6](#)

LG directs best possible care for pilgrims at GMC Udhampur

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jul 18: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday reviewed the situation after a Shri Amarnathji Yatra convoy vehicle met with an accident near Jakhani in Udhampur earlier in the morning.

The Lieutenant Governor spoke with Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Minga Sherpa and medical officials, and directed for best possible medical care for the injured undergoing treatment at GMC Udhampur.

In a post on X, the Lieutenant Governor said: “Spoke with the Deputy Commissioner of Udhampur and medical officials and inquired about the health condition of | [More on P6](#)

Govt extends summer vacation for Kashmir schools till Jul 22

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Jul 18: The government on Saturday extended summer vacation for all schools of Kashmir division and winter zones of Jammu division till Wednesday in view of prevailing heat weather conditions and inclement weather advisory.

Talking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Education Minister Sakina Itoo said, “Summer vacations have been extended by three more days for schools in Kashmir division and winter zones of Jammu division.”

“The vacation has been announced in view of the prevailing heat wave and the inclement weather advisory issued by the weatherman,” the minister said.

Earlier, the minister said that the Jammu and Kashmir government will take a final decision

on whether to extend summer vacations in schools after reviewing the prevailing weather conditions.

She said the health and well-being of students remain the government's top priority. “There is no doubt that weather conditions in Kashmir are changing. For us, the health of students is more important than anything else,” she added.

The government had earlier announced summer vacations for all schools in the Kashmir Division and winter zones of the Jammu Division from July 6 to July 19.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department has forecast the prevailing heatwave to continue till July 19 and warned of heavy rainfall and the possibility of flash floods between July 20 and July 23. (KNO)

NC leaders head to Delhi for statehood protest

Await venue clearance, Ramlila Maidan or Jantar Mantar possible sites

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Jul 18: Ahead of its proposed programme in New Delhi over the demand for statehood, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, NC president Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and several legislators left for New Delhi on Saturday to participate in the event.

Omar Abdullah and his father left Srinagar in the afternoon and reached the national capital to take part in the proposed protest programmes over the demand for statehood.

Sources in the National Conference told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that they were awaiting permission to hold a sit-in over the demand but



expressed hope of receiving it.

They added that the protest could take place either at Jantar Mantar the designated venue for protests-or at Ramlila Maidan, which hosts the annual Ramlila as well as major political rallies.

The NC had proposed to stage a protest on July 20, the first day of the Monsoon session of Parliament, to press for the restoration of statehood. | [More on P6](#)

Omar seeking statehood for family's 'royal lifestyle,' not people: LoP Sharma

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) senior leader Sunil Sharma on Saturday said Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is demanding restoration of statehood not for J&K people but to restore the Abdullah family's “royal lifestyle.”

Speaking to reporters here, Sharma, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said, “The issue of statehood had always been the BJP's agenda and not that of the National | [More on P6](#)

Vikram-1 success reflects PM Modi's vision for space sector: LG Sinha

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Jul 18: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday extended his heartfelt congratulations to Team Skyroot Aerospace following the successful maiden orbital launch of Vikram-1.

In his congratulatory message, the Lieutenant Governor said: “Heartiest congratulations to Team Skyroot Aerospace on the successful maiden orbital launch of Vikram-1. This historic achievement is a proud moment for the nation and reflects Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji's vision of



strengthening India's space sector through innovation and private enterprise. I applaud Team Skyroot for their pioneering spirit and dedication. May this remarkable success inspire our youth | [More on P6](#)

Smartphones replacing childhood before children learn to live: Psychiatrist

Dr Abrar Guroo links excessive smartphone use to anxiety, poor sleep, poor academics; says most effective parental control is parent with healthy digital habits

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jul 18: Amid growing concerns over children's increasing dependence on smartphones, psychiatrist Dr Mohd Abrar Guroo at IMHANS Srinagar has cautioned that children are being exposed to digital devices long before they develop the emotional, social and cognitive skills needed to navigate life. He warned that the trend is taking a visible toll on their mental health and overall development.

Drawing from his clinical experience, Dr Guroo, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said a worrying



pattern has emerged among children and adolescents visiting psychiatric clinics. He noted that many parents now report

their children have become impatient, easily distracted, emotionally reactive and unable to stay away from their

mobile phones, while teachers increasingly speak of declining attention spans, poor classroom engagement and reduced academic focus.

“These are no longer isolated observations but signs of a broader behavioural shift linked to excessive digital exposure. A child's brain is designed to develop through play, conversations, reading, outdoor activities and even moments of boredom. Today, boredom is instantly replaced by a screen. Continuous exposure to short-form videos, online games and social media conditions the brain to seek immediate | [More on P6](#)

Kashmir's premium cherries, plums reach Singapore market for first time

APEDA says committed to connecting J&K farmers to global markets

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Jul 18: In another significant milestone for Jammu & Kashmir's horticulture sector, premium Areko cherries and Scentrose plums from the orchards of Shopian and Pulwama have made their debut in Singapore, marking the first-ever commercial shipment of these premium fruits to the Southeast Asian market.

The export, facilitated by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) in collaboration with



exporters, growers and other stakeholders, reflects India's growing success in positioning Jammu & Kashmir as a reliable global source of high-quality temperate fruits.

According to the news

agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the latest shipment builds upon the successful export of premium cherries and plums to Abu Dhabi and Dubai earlier this month, further expanding the international footprint of Kashmir's horticultural produce.

It also follows the successful promotion and export of locally grown cherries to Saudi Arabia and the UAE during the previous season, demonstrating the steadily rising global demand for fruits from the Valley.

The fruits were cultivated using | [More on P6](#)

CS assesses 'Data Management Strategy' for J&K

Directs creation of integrated data ecosystem for seamless citizen services



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: In a significant step towards advancing digital governance and ensuring hassle-free delivery of public services, Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, chaired a high-level meeting to review the proposed 'Data Management Strategy and Action Plan' aimed at creating a secure, interoperable and citizen-centric data ecosystem across Government departments in Jammu and Kashmir.

The proposed initiative, as per an official statement, seeks to establish an integrated framework for secure sharing and harmonization of government data, enabling departments to access authenticated information through authorized digital platforms instead of repeatedly seeking the same documents from citizens. The initiative is expected to substantially improve inter-departmental coordination, eliminate duplication of records, enhance transparency and ensure faster, more efficient delivery of welfare benefits and public services.

The meeting was attended by the concerned Administrative Secretaries including Commissioner Secretary, PD&MD; MD, J&K Bank; DG, E&S; SIO, NIC; Director, Planning and HoDs from other concerned Departments.

Reviewing the proposed framework, the Chief

Secretary underscored that effective governance in the digital era rests on the availability of authentic, standardized and secure data.

He observed that while Government departments generate large volumes of valuable data, its true potential can only be realised when such information is managed under a common governance framework and shared securely across departments for improving public service delivery.

The Chief Secretary further stressed that the Government's endeavour is to ensure that citizens are not required to submit the same information repeatedly for availing benefits under different schemes.

He reiterated that the objective is to build an integrated digital governance ecosystem where authenticated data, once available with the Government, can be securely utilised by authorized departments for delivery of eligible services, while fully safeguarding privacy, confidentiality and data security, he added.

The Chief Secretary directed all Administrative Departments to extend full cooperation in implementation of the strategy and ensure standardization of departmental datasets in accordance with the prescribed data governance framework.

Atal Dulloo also called for adoption of uniform metadata standards,

robust quality assurance mechanisms and secure interoperability protocols to facilitate seamless exchange of information across departments.

During the meeting, a detailed presentation was made by the Planning Department on the five strategic pillars of the proposed Data Management Strategy comprising Data Governance & Standards, Base Registries & Unique Identifiers, Interoperability & Harmonization, Data Security & Privacy and Institutional Capacity & Coordination.

The strategy aims to establish a "Single Source of Truth" by preserving original departmental datasets while enabling secure, API-based exchange of information among authorized users, thereby supporting evidence-based governance, efficient planning and better monitoring of developmental programmes.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed the proposed initiative involving integration of the Civil Registration System (CRS) with J&K Bank for automatic initiation of insurance claims under PMJJBY and PMSBY immediately after issuance of a death certificate. Once operational, the mechanism will enable eligible claim settlements without requiring bereaved families to submit separate applications, thereby reducing procedural delays and ensuring timely

financial assistance.

The meeting also discussed integration of the Civil Registration System with the Health, Social Welfare and School Education Departments to enable automatic activation of welfare interventions from birth onwards.

Under this mechanism, registration of every birth would trigger enrolment for nutrition support, immunization and other eligible welfare schemes, while subsequent integration with APAAR ID would facilitate seamless linkage with school admissions, scholarships and other educational entitlements.

The Chief Secretary further reviewed the proposal for creation of an integrated institutional database of schools, hospitals, Anganwadi centres and other public institutions through adoption of common geographical identifiers to facilitate better planning, infrastructure mapping and resource allocation.

The Chief Secretary directed the concerned departments to prepare a time-bound implementation roadmap with clearly defined milestones for phased rollout of the strategy and emphasized strict adherence to data privacy, cyber security and governance standards at every stage.

He expressed confidence that the proposed initiative would mark a significant step towards building a modern, integrated and citizen-centric governance ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir. He said the initiative would strengthen evidence-based planning, improve inter-departmental coordination and ensure seamless delivery of Government services and welfare benefits by enabling secure and efficient sharing of authenticated data across departments.

J&K Judicial Academy holds day-33 training for Civil Judges, Judicial Officers in Srinagar

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: Under the patronage of Acting Chief Justice of High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and Patron-in-Chief, Governing Committee, J&K Judicial Academy, Sanjeev Kumar and guidance of Justice Rajesh Oswal, Judge, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and Chairman, Governing Committee, J&K Judicial Academy, the Jammu & Kashmir Judicial Academy on Saturday conducted Day-33 of academic sessions of the Pre-Appointment Induction Training Programme for Trainee Civil Judges (Junior Division), Batch-2026, along with a Continuing Judicial Education Programme for the Judicial Officers of Batch-2020 at the J&K Judicial Academy, Mominabad, Srinagar.

The morning sessions, as per an official statement, were conducted by Justice Rajesh Bindal, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India, on "Technology in the Administration of Justice" and "Artificial Intelligence for Judges."

Addressing the participants, Justice Rajesh Bindal highlighted the indispensable role of technology in strengthening an efficient, transparent and accessible justice delivery system. He underscored the judiciary's progressive transition towards digital and paperless courts through practical demonstrations of technological platforms



such as the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), Electronic Supreme Court Reports (eSCR) and the Bhashini application. Justice Rajesh Bindal familiarized the participants with their utility in judicial functioning, legal research and access to justice.

During the session on Artificial Intelligence, he explained the concept of Artificial Intelligence and demonstrated its

applications in legal research, judgment support, drafting, summarization and transcription. He emphasised that AI is only an enabling tool and can never substitute the independent application of judicial mind.

Justice Rajesh Bindal urged the judicial officers to embrace technology responsibly and ethically while ensuring that the ultimate responsibility for judicial

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION DOORU

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

NIT NO 20 OF R&B/Dooru/2026-27 /E-TENDERING/ EED/HD/ 1367-72 DATED: 18-07-2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, Union Territory of J&K, Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Dooru invited e-tenders on % age basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with &K Govt. CPWD Railways and other State/Central Governments for each of the following works: -

S. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (in Rs)	Earnest Money (In Rs)	Time of Completion	Major Head of Account	Class of Contractor
1	Construction of R-wall and Parapets at Spots to Nowgan Shangran main road to KVK Nowpora Keeri length 0.7 Km	19.45 lacs (16.49 + 2.96)	800	38900	2 Years	District Capex Budget 2026-27	CEE & BEE Class only /MSME
2	Construction Upgradation of road from Mehmoobabad Bridge to Tarigam via Zaren-ladh Phase I.	29.17 lacs (24.72+ 4.45)	1100	58340	2 Years	District Capex Budget 2026-27	AAY & BEE Class only/MSME
3	Upgradation of Peerpora mantipora road Phase II	4.93 lacs (4.18 + 0.75)	200	9860	2 Years	District Capex Budget 2026-27	DEE Class only/MSME

Position of AAA : Accorded. Position of TS Accorded. The date of completion is subject to the availability of funds. The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms- and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:

S.No.	Particulars	Dated
1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	18-07/2026
2	Period of Downloading of bidder documents	From 19 /07/2026 (6:00 Pm) To 27-07-2026 (06:00 PM)
3	Bid submission Start Date	From 19 /07/2026 (6:00 pm) To 27/07/2026 (06:00 PM)
4	Bid Submission End Date	To 27/07/2026 (11:00AM)
5	Date and time of opening of bid (online)	In the office of Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division DOORU.

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender document in shape of Treasury Challan / Receipt (Under

MH- 0059

2. PWD) in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division DOORU [Tender Inviting Authority] (Name of Work to be mentioned on the Treasury Challan / Receipt)(Refer Govt. order No. O.M No. A/24 (2017)-651 Dt 07-06-2018 (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date (NIT No and Name of work/ Item No. should be mentioned on Treasury Challan) and EMD (2% of advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division DOORU (Tender receiving Authority).

3. All the Bidders have to submit Earnest Money/Bid Security (EMD@2% of Advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG. Non submission of Earnest Money/Bid Security shall render the bidder as No-responsive.

The 1st lowest responsive (Successful) Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of contract as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division DOORU (Tender receiving authority) within 03 Days before fixation of Contract and shall be released after successful completion of Defect Liability Period (DLP) of the work. Failure to produce Performance Security shall render the L1 as non-responsive and case for debarring of the Contractor for a period of 03 Year be forwarded to Higher Authorities.

4. The Earnest Money Deposit (EMD@2% of Advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG of the successful Bidder shall be released after receiving Performance security (B5% of the allotted cost in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG and same shall be released after successful completion of Defect Liability Period (DLP) of the work.

5. Note: a. MSME's are required to pay only 50% of Tender Document Cost or Rs 500/- whichever is lower. MSME's are required to pay only 50% of the amount of EMD/ Bid Security or Rs 5000/- whichever is lower.

6. The bidders are requested to quote their rates excluding 18%GST .

7. The date and time of opening of Bid shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the office of Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division DOORU.

9. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of Opening of Technical bids.

10. The Earnest Money/Performance Security shall be forfeited if:

a) Any bidder/tenderer withdraws his bid/tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modification in the terms and conditions of the bid.

Failure of successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within specified time period before issue of letter of intent.

b) Successful Bidder fails to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

c) If at any stage of work, the Bidder back up from the contract, again the Performance security/EMD as well as work done claim will be forfeited.

. e) The tenders shall be opened and allotted to 1st lowest responsive bidder only when the funds are released/ available on Beams.

11. Instruction to bidders regarding e-tendering process.

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

b. To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved vendors.

c. The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No Financial bid will be accepted in physical form.

d. Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para-1.

e. Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with bid.

No:EED/HD/ Dt: 18/07/2026 DIPP-3445/26 Dated: 18-07-2026

Er Mohd Ashraf Khan
Executive Engineer,

DC Budgam reviews progress of Mission Gyan Bharatam implementation

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, JULY 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan Saturday called for comprehensive preservation of manuscript heritage in Budgam district.

The Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, said this while chairing a meeting to assess the implementation of Mission Gyan Bharatam, aimed at preserving, documenting, and digitising

available manuscript and other heritage sites.

At the outset, the DC, as per an official statement, stressed the need for coordinated and time bound efforts to identify, document, and preserve historical manuscripts and records. He directed all government departments, Tehsildars, and BDOs to conduct surveys in their jurisdictions, including religious sites, heritage buildings, government offices, and private collections, to

identify valuable manuscripts for preservation.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasised systematic digitisation, scientific conservation, and public awareness to safeguard these heritage assets and make them accessible through a national digital repository.

The General Manager, DIC Budgam, briefed the meeting on the progress of digitisation, public outreach, and other activities under the Mission.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT INFORMATION OFFICER ANANTNAG

Ph/Fax: 01932-464427

Email: infdic-ang@jk.gov.in

Short Term Quotation

For and on the behalf of the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, short term quotations are invited from registered/experienced vendors/agencies for providing hard drives (1 TB) for storage of content (videos, photos, press notes etc) especially related to SANDY-2026, which shall conform to the terms and conditions mentioned below:

- The tenders/quotations in sealed envelope should reach this office by or before 25.07.2026 at 01.00 PM during working days either personally or through registered post.
 - The rates should be quoted in figures as well as in words without cutting.
 - Incomplete/conditional quotations in any respect will be rejected.
 - No tenders shall be entertained after after the last date i.e., 25.07.2026, 01:00 PM under any circumstances. This office reserves the right to reject or modify any or all the tenders at any time without assigning any reasons thereof.
 - The payment to the agency shall be subject to the satisfactory supply of item(s) and availability of funds in the relevant Head.
 - The rates shall include GST and any other tax as applicable under rules.
- For any clarification, contact the office (Ph. No. 01932-464427) of the undersigned during office hours within the stipulated time.

District Information Officer Anantnag

No: DIC/INF/ANG/2026-446-50

Dated: 18.07.2026

DIPP-3455/26
Dated: 18-07-2026

Div Com reviews I-Day preparation celebrations

KT News Desk

Srinagar, July 18: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to review the preparedness of various departments for the forthcoming Independence Day celebrations, emphasizing the need for advance planning, inter-departmental coordination, and timely mobilization of resources to ensure the smooth conduct of the national event.

The meeting was attended by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir, V.K. Birdi, Deputy Commissioners of all districts, and Heads of Departments (HoDs) of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Roads & Buildings (R&B), Power Development Department (PDD), Education, Culture, Jal Shakti, Health, Information, Hospitality & Protocol, Traffic Police, Fire & Emergency Services, Doodarshan, SKICC, and other concerned departments.

The Divisional Commissioner conducted a comprehensive review of arrangements relating



to security, logistics, protocol, medical and emergency services, venue management, full-dress rehearsal, event execution, and post-event coordination.

To ensure seamless arrangements, Garg directed the Chief Engineer, R&B, to make comprehensive arrangements for tentage, seating, stage and dais, besides installing LED screens at the venue. The Chief Engineer, PDD, was instructed to

ensure uninterrupted power supply with adequate generator backup and illumination of important government buildings.

The Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti, was directed to ensure an adequate supply of drinking water and installation of RO units at the venue. The Floriculture Department was tasked with decorating the dais and making floral arrangements at the Balidan Stambh, while the Police

Department was instructed to facilitate the showering of flower petals through drones during the celebrations.

The Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, was directed to ensure proper sanitation, adequate toilet facilities, and effective dewatering arrangements in the event of rainfall.

The Police Department was instructed to put in place fool-proof security arrangements to ensure the peaceful and smooth conduct of the Independence Day function.

The Information Department was directed to install a synchronized public address system in coordination with the R&B Department and Police to ensure uninterrupted proceedings besides installation of hoardings.

The Divisional Commissioner further directed the Departments of Culture, Youth Services & Sports, and the J&K Sports Council to prepare cultural programmes and performances. He also instructed the concerned departments to organize contingents comprising personnel from the Police, other security agencies, NCC,

schools, and colleges. In addition, schools, colleges, and the Information Department were asked to organize quiz and singing competitions as part of the celebrations.

The Fire & Emergency Services Department was directed to deploy fire tenders and ensure emergency preparedness, while the Hospitality & Protocol Department was instructed to make appropriate arrangements for refreshments and other protocol-related requirements.

The Deputy Commissioners were directed to make similar comprehensive preparations in their respective districts to ensure that Independence Day is celebrated with patriotic fervour, enthusiasm, and dignity across Kashmir.

Speaking during the meeting, IGP Kashmir V.K. Birdi stressed strict adherence to the prescribed protocol for flag-hoisting ceremonies at all venues. He also called upon officers to deploy nodal officers and sensitize participants and dignitaries about the laid-down protocols to ensure the successful and orderly conduct of the celebrations.

Delegations call on LG Sinha



KT News Desk

Srinagar, July 18: A delegation led by Mehraj-u-Din Sheikh, District President, J&K Other Backward Classes Welfare Association (JKOBCWA), called on Lieutenant

Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday and projected various welfare issues of the sanitation workforce community. Subsequently, Anush Shahnaz Khan, Chairman, Rise Up Youth Foundation also called on the Lieutenant Governor.

Body of missing 10 year old boy recovered from Kishenganga

KNO

Bandipora, Jul 18: The body of a 10-year-old boy, who had drowned in the Kishenganga River in Gurez earlier this month, was recovered on Saturday after remaining missing for nearly 12 days, officials said.

An official said that the body of the missing boy was spotted near the dam site in the Kanzalwan area

on Saturday afternoon.

He said the boy had drowned in the Kishenganga River near Sheikhpora in Tulail on July 6, triggering a massive search operation by police, rescue teams and local volunteers.

The deceased was identified as Babar Bashir (10), a resident of Tulail, Bandipora. The body will be handed over to the family after the completion of legal formalities—(KNO)

Jailed MP Er Rashid supports statehood protest

AIP chief to observe hunger strike on July-20

Waris Fayaz

Srinagar, Jul 18: Jailed Baramulla MP Er Rashid has backed the National Conference's proposed July 20 statehood protest while accusing it of diluting Jammu and Kashmir's larger political aspirations.

He announced that he would observe a day long hunger strike on July 20 and walk barefoot to Parliament the next day to seek a meaningful dialogue on the region's political future.

In a message sent from Tihar Jail and read out during a press conference organised by the Awami Itihaad Party (AIP) here, Er Rashid said AIP would support the statehood protest in the larger interest of the people but clarified that the move should not be seen as an endorsement of the National Conference's "weak and diluted" political stand on various issues concerning Jammu



and Kashmir.

He alleged that the National Conference had failed to pursue the larger political aspirations of the people by limiting its demand to restoration of statehood. Baramulla MP said the people of Jammu and Kashmir had not made sacrifices merely for statehood but for the restoration of all their legitimate political and constitutional rights.

The jailed MP also

criticised other regional parties, saying they too must explain what they had done for the restoration of statehood, Article 370 and Article 35A instead of only targeting the National Conference.

Announcing a symbolic protest, Er Rashid said he would observe a day long hunger strike on July 20 in solidarity with the National Conference's statehood protest. He further announced that he would walk barefoot to Parliament on July 21 to press for a meaningful, time bound and result oriented dialogue between the Centre, elected representatives and other stakeholders of Jammu and Kashmir.

He reiterated that AIP's support for the July 20 protest should not be interpreted as support for the National Conference's political line, maintaining that the party remains committed to the

restoration of the complete political and constitutional rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

AIP Chief Spokesperson Inam Un Nabi said the party has consistently advocated the restoration of full statehood, Articles 370 and 35A, revocation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, release of political prisoners, withdrawal of termination orders of government employees, an end to house demolitions, curbs on the use of the Public Safety Act and restoration of all democratic and constitutional rights.

While welcoming the National Conference's decision to hold a statehood protest, Inam Un Nabi termed the move "too little, too late," alleging that restricting the struggle to statehood alone ignored the larger political aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir—(KNO)

Crisis in Hill Council Kargil

NC expels CEC Jaffar Akhoon from party

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Jul 18: The ruling National Conference on Saturday expelled Chief Executive Councillor of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffar Akhoon, from the party for refusing to honour the pre-election commitment of transferring power to the Congress.

The National Conference General Secretary, Ali Muhammad Sagar ordered Akhoon's removal from the party's basic membership for six years, citing anti-party activities and indiscipline.

As per the five-year power-sharing pact between the NC and the Congress, the chair of the CEC was to rotate between the two allies, with the NC holding the position for the first two-and-a-half years, followed by the Congress for the remaining tenure.

However, CEC Akhoon refused to step down after completing his term, prompting 16 councillors to bring a no-confidence motion against him. The Ladakh administration remains indecisive over the motion.

On July 13, all NC councillors as well as BJP councillors passed the annual plan for 2026-27 during the general council meeting of the Council.

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www.kashmirthunder.in

WMDA hosts Water Sports Festival

Manasbal fest draws 200 participants



Raja Syed Rather

Manasbal, Jul 18: The Wullar-Manasbal Development Authority (WMDA) organised a day-long Manasbal Water Sports Festival on Saturday at the scenic Manasbal Lake in collaboration with a local tourism sports group, Swim N Survival Society Kashmir (SSSK).

The festival witnessed enthusiastic participation

from around 200 school-going children, athletes, and water sports enthusiasts, making it one of the largest water sports events held at the lake in recent times. The event featured a variety of exciting competitions, including Open Water Swimming, Kayaking, Paddle Boat Race, Shikara Race for Local Boatmen, and other events, aimed at promoting water recreational activities,

encouraging healthy outdoor recreation, and showcasing the tourism and sporting potential of Manasbal Lake.

Winners of the events were later felicitated by Chief Executive Officer, Dr Ahsanul Haq Chishti. Speaking on the occasion, the CEO congratulated all participants and winners and reaffirmed WMDA's

Continued on
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Driver killed after tractor overturns in Budgam

Naveed Ul Haq Ganaiee

Budgam, Jul 18: A man was killed after a tractor turned turtle in the Batapora area of Wathora in Chadoora tehsil of central Kashmir's Budgam district on Saturday.

Officials said that the tractor overturned while the man was driving it, leaving him critically injured.

He was immediately shifted to Sub-District Hospital Chadoora, where doctors declared him brought dead.

The deceased has been identified as Ishfaq Ahmad, son of Mohammad Rafiq, a resident of Hanjigund, Chadoora.

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

Justice Sanjeev Kumar chairs awareness programme on NALSA DAWN scheme

KT News Desk

Pulwama, July 18: Acting Chief Justice, High Court of J&K and Ladakh & Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority, Sanjeev Kumar, in presence of Justice, Sanjay Dhar, Administrative Judge, District Pulwama on Saturday presided over an awareness programme on NALSA DAWN (Drug Awareness and Wellness Navigation) Scheme, 2025 and Drug Abuse and Its Illicit Trafficking at Government Degree College (Boys), Pulwama.

The programme was organized by the District Legal Services Authority, Pulwama under the aegis of J&K Legal Services Authority.

On arrival, the Acting Chief Justice along with the Administrative Judge was accorded a ceremonial Guard



of Honour by the police contingent of District Pulwama at Government Degree College (Boys), Pulwama. The programme formally commenced with the inauguration of the Legal Literacy

Club at the college.

In his presidential address, the Acting Chief Justice lauded the efforts of DLSA Pulwama and J&K LSA for organizing such programmes which are the need of the

hour. He impressed upon the audience, especially the youth, to follow the golden principle of "Prevention is Better than Cure". He stated that drug abuse has become a grave threat to the society and collective efforts are required to save the younger generation.

Delivering the welcome address, Malik Shabir Ahmad, Principal District & Sessions Judge & Chairman DLSA Pulwama, highlighted the importance of spreading legal awareness and community outreach to effectively combat the drug abuse.

The Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, elaborated on the theme of the programme and the objectives of the NALSA DAWN Scheme, 2025. He emphasized the role of Legal Services Institutions in creating a drug-free society

through awareness, counselling and rehabilitation.

Deputy Commissioner, Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom assured full administrative support for awareness, prevention and rehabilitation campaigns in the district.

An address by the Psychiatrist, Dr. Umer was held, wherein the psychological, social and health consequences of substance abuse were discussed. The expert highlighted the initiatives of the government, including dedicated de-addiction centres in all hospitals of J&K and notified helpline numbers for easy access by the affected persons and their families.

This was followed by a special address by the Administrative

Continued on
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Over 100 deodar trees planted in Budgam

KNO

Budgam, Jul 18: A group of local volunteers and community members on Saturday planted over 100 deodar saplings at Rathsun in central Kashmir's Budgam district as part of a community-led initiative to promote afforestation and environmental conservation.

The drive was organised through voluntary contributions under the banner of Green Valley Revival.

In a statement, a spokesperson said the initiative was organised entirely through voluntary efforts, with members contributing their own time, resources, and funds. Working under the banner of Green Valley Revival, the volunteers share a common vision of reviving Kashmir's green cover through sustained afforestation and encouraging greater public participation in environmental conservation.

He said local community members also joined the drive, making the plantation campaign a collective effort.

The spokesperson said those who contributed to the initiative included Irfan Mir, a tourism teacher at GGHS Kothi Bagh, Srinagar; Faizan Arif, an independent climate analyst and

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Vikram-1: Charting India's Cosmic Future

Reforms, Progress And Liftoff - A New Era: India Emerging As A Global Space Hub

Press Information Bureau

India's space sector is undergoing a historic transformation through the Government of India's forward-looking reforms. As Skyroot Aerospace launched Vikram-1, India's first privately developed orbital rocket, the country's growing private space ecosystem is demonstrating the impact of these reforms. The Indian Space Policy 2023 has opened the entire space value chain to private participation, fostering innovation, investment and enterprise across the space ecosystem. Indian industry is now participating in satellite manufacturing, launch services, space applications and downstream services.

The impact of these reforms is already visible in the numbers. India's space startup ecosystem has grown from just one startup in 2014 to over 400 in 2026, reflecting the rapid expansion of private participation and innovation across the space sector.

Government reforms are also accelerating the growth of India's space economy. Valued at approximately USD 8.4 billion today, the sector is projected to grow five-fold to USD 40-45 billion by 2030. It is further aimed to reach USD 100 billion by 2040. Sustained Government support, enabling regulations and strong public-private partnerships continue to drive this growth, positioning India as a global hub for space technology, manufacturing, innovation and commercial space activities. Read More on Building India's Space Future: INDIA'S SPACE ODYSSEY

Mission Aagaman: Vikram-1
Vikram-1, developed by Skyroot Aerospace, is India's first privately developed orbital launch vehicle, capable of placing 350 kg into Low Earth Orbit (LEO). Orbital launch vehicles deploy satellites into stable Earth orbits, supporting communication, navigation, Earth observation and scientific research.

It is built with an all-carbon composite structure, reliable solid-fuel boosters and a 3D-printed liquid engine. Vikram-1 showcases India's growing private-sector launch capabilities.

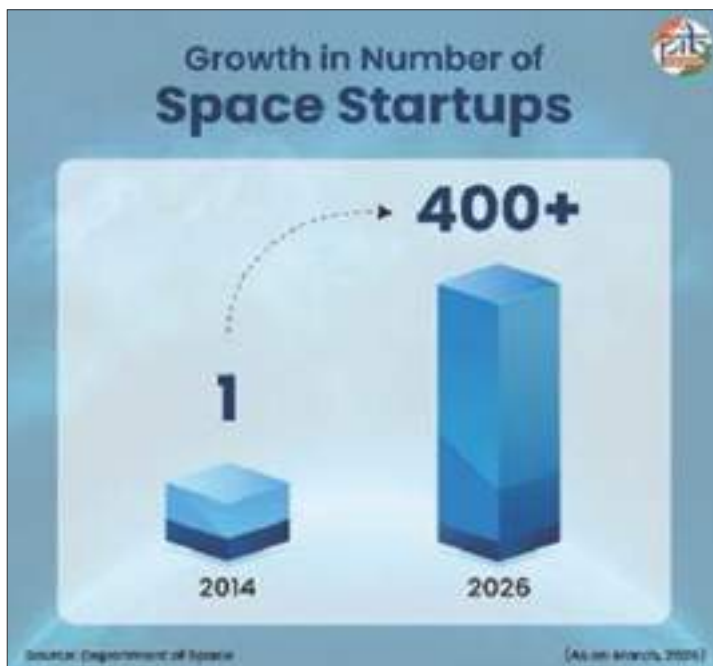
Vikram-1 is scheduled to launch under Mission Aagaman between 12 July and 4 August 2026. A successful mission will validate the country's indigenous commercial launch capability and the success of the Government of India's space sector reforms.

The mission will deploy multiple customer payloads into LEO at an altitude of 450 kilometres (280 miles). These include Skyroot's SCOPE satellite, DCUBED's technology demonstration payload, Grahha Space's SOLARAS S3 satellite, and CosmoServe Space's Embrace, a robotic arm designed to capture orbital debris.

The maiden flight will also carry two symbolic payloads—"Cosmic Bloom", a floral-shaped artwork, and an 18-karat gold micro-rocket. The micro-rocket features microscopic sculptures of C. V. Raman, Vikram Sarabhai and A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, each smaller than a grain of rice, paying tribute to India's pioneering scientists.

Key Reforms Enabling Private Participation in India's Space Sector

The Government of India has taken profound steps by introducing key reforms in the space sector to expand private sector participation and unlock new opportunities for innovation.



Indian Space Policy 2023

The Government notified the Indian Space Policy 2023, allowing Non-Government Entities (NGEs) to take part across the entire space value chain. This move opened doors for private players to space-related activities in India. The policy aims to drive innovation in technology, encouraging fresh ideas and advancements within the sector. Alongside this, the policy also encourages international collaboration, fostering partnerships that support peaceful exploration of space. Collectively, these steps mark a significant shift toward a more open and inclusive space ecosystem in India.

Single-Window Space Regulator

The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) is acting as an autonomous single-window agency to authorise and promote space activities by Government entities and NGEs. Strengthened by the Indian Space Policy 2023, IN-SPACe also provides a stable and predictable regulatory framework and facilitates end-to-end industry participation. Additionally, it enables access to ISRO facilities, technologies and technical expertise, and streamlines approvals through transparent guidelines. As of June 2026, IN-SPACe has registered over 4,500 organisations, issued 133 authorisations, and signed 106 Memoranda of Understanding.

Additionally, as of February 2026, IN-SPACe facilitated USD 150 million in investments into Indian space startups during CY 2025, with the top 10 startups securing a confirmed order book of the same value. By June 2026, IN-SPACe had also facilitated 118 technology transfer agreements and signed 189 Joint Project Implementation Plans (JPIPs), Technology Partnership Agreements (TPAs) and Business Partnership Agreements (BPAs), accelerating technology commercialisation and industry collaboration.

Catalysing Private Investment

IN-SPACe Seed Fund Scheme: This scheme provides early-stage financial assistance to space startups and Micro and Small Enterprises. It supports them in developing innovative space technologies and practical applications for various uses. Moreover,

the scheme offers grants of up to 1 crore to eligible applicants working in this space. Along with funding, it also provides mentorship, training, and networking support to help startups grow. Additionally, the scheme grants funds to Indian space startups working on agriculture-related technologies. It supports solutions for disaster management and urban development that rely on space technology.

1,000 crore Venture Capital (VC) Fund: A VC under IN-SPACe aims to accelerate private participation in the space sector. This fund provides early-stage capital to promising startups working in space technology and related fields. It also attracts private investment into the sector while supporting the production of domestic space startups. The initiative aims to expand India's space economy five-fold over the coming decade. The fund will be deployed over five years, starting from FY 2025-26 through FY 2029-30. Annual investments under this fund will range between 100 crore and 250 crore.

500 crore Technology Adoption Fund (TAF): IN-SPACe introduced the Technology Adoption Fund (TAF). This fund aims to accelerate the deployment of indigenous space technologies developed by NGEs. It also supports the transformation of early-stage technologies into commercially viable products for the market. The scheme offers funding of up to 60% of project cost for startups and MSMEs. Large industries can receive funding of up to 40% of their project cost. This funding is subject to a maximum limit of 25 crore per project.

Commercialisation of India's Space Programme

The Indian Space Policy 2023 defined the role of NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) as ISRO's commercial arm. NSIL manufactures and procures space systems on commercial principles. It also delivers end-to-end space solutions to both Government entities and NGEs. NSIL further expands private participation through PSLV productionisation and small satellite technology transfer. It also supports satellite services while marketing space products and spin-off technologies.

Over the years, NSIL has witnessed a



tenfold increase in revenue, reflecting its expanding commercial footprint in the global space sector. As of December 2025, over 70 Technology Transfer Agreements had enabled the transfer of ISRO-developed technologies to industry, accelerating their commercialisation. As of July 2026, NSIL has launched a total of 141 satellites, including 138 international/customer satellites and 3 Indian satellites, reinforcing India's position as a trusted global launch service provider.

Liberalised FDI Policy for Space

The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy for the space sector was liberalised to make it more investor-friendly. The revised policy permits up to 74% automatic FDI in satellite manufacturing and operations, 49% automatic FDI in launch vehicles and spaceports, and 100% automatic FDI in the manufacturing of satellite components and subsystems. The reform is expected to accelerate investments, promote technology transfer and collaborative research, and further improve the ease of doing business in India's space sector.

The Indian government has established a liberalized foreign direct investment (FDI) policy for the space sector, with different entry routes and sectoral caps based on the specific activity.

For satellites-manufacturing and operation, 100% FDI is permitted, with up to 74% allowed under the automatic route and any investment beyond 74% requiring government approval.

Satellite data products, as well as the ground segment and user segment, also allow 100% FDI. However, the automatic route is permitted only up to 49%, while investment beyond 49% requires government approval.

For launch vehicles and associated systems or subsystems, the policy similarly permits 100% FDI, with up to 49% under the automatic route and anything beyond 49% requiring government approval.

The creation of spaceports for launching and receiving spacecraft, along with the manufacturing of components and systems/subsystems for satellites, ground segment and user segment, allows 100% FDI, with the

entire investment permitted under the automatic route.

From Policy to Progress

Government reforms have unlocked innovation, private participation and commercial opportunities across India's space ecosystem. These reforms have translated into tangible outcomes in launch services, indigenous technology development, public-private partnerships and technology transfer.

NSIL strengthened India's commercial launch capabilities by executing India's first dedicated commercial LVM3 mission in October 2022, launching 36 OneWeb satellites into Low Earth Orbit and reinforcing India's position in the global launch services market.

Vikram-S, launched under Mission Prarambh in November 2022. Vikram-S was India's first privately developed rocket and the country's first private launch authorised by IN-SPACe. The technology demonstration mission carried three customer payloads equipped with sensors to validate critical launch technologies for future orbital missions.

Agnikul Cosmos became the first NGE to launch a rocket from India's first private launch pad ("Dhanush") at Sriharikota in May 2024. The mission also demonstrated the world's first single-piece 3D-printed semi-cryogenic rocket engine.

IN-SPACe approved a Public-Private Partnership for an Earth Observation satellite constellation, led by Pixel with Dhruva Space, SatSure Analytics India and Piersight Space, to strengthen applications such as agriculture, disaster management, climate monitoring and urban planning.

Technology commercialisation has also accelerated. In February 2026, IN-SPACe facilitated the 511 crore, 10-year transfer of SSLV technology to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), enabling industry-led production and launch services. Bellatrix Aerospace also successfully demonstrated an indigenous Green Propulsion System under DRDO's Technology Development Fund, strengthening indigenous capabilities through cleaner propulsion technologies.

This collaborative ecosystem is shaping India's emergence as a global space technology hub.

The Road Ahead

India's space sector stands at the threshold of a new era, driven by Government-led reforms and a vibrant private ecosystem. The Indian Space Policy 2023, liberalised FDI norms, and dedicated funding initiatives have opened the entire space value chain to any potential players. These reforms have fostered a dynamic ecosystem marked by growing startups, indigenous innovation, and expanding commercial activities. Moreover, as Vikram-1 prepares for liftoff under Mission Aagaman, it would represent more than a technological milestone. It reflects the growing confidence and capabilities of India's private space industry. The journey from ISRO-led missions to a thriving space ecosystem demonstrates the success of the Government's reform agenda. With sustained policy support, public-private partnerships, and technological innovation, India is well positioned to emerge as a leading global space power and a key driver of the future space economy.

AI Advance Heralds The Death Of The Degree

Capability is the new dividing line. Universities do not know their own value

Iryna Volnytska

Just as French aristocrats under the ancient regime could hardly imagine the abolition of their noble titles, most of today's university leaders cannot conceive of a world in which the degrees they confer become worthless pieces of paper. The former were in for a rude awakening in 1790; the latter are barreling toward a similar shock.

No longer a social service, education has become the new infrastructure of power. Whoever controls the development of technical talent controls the future. The countries that understand this have stopped arguing about teaching quality and started measuring how fast knowledge translates into capability. The rest are reforming a 20th-century system and calling it progress.

Large employers such as Google, Apple, and IBM now have hiring practices that focus on skills rather than degrees. More than half of employers have gone so far as to drop degree requirements entirely for some roles. Recruiters no longer want to know how much applicants have memorized; they want to know how they make decisions amid uncertainty and how quickly they learn.

Y Combinator funds Stanford dropouts — or people who forgo university altogether. A GitHub profile now says more about what you can build than a college transcript. To be sure, degrees still hold value, but mostly for entry to regulated professions such as law



and medicine, public sector jobs, and prestige networks. But notice that this value lies in access, not knowledge.

In an AI-transformed world, capability is the new dividing line. True, a free AI chatbot will explain quantum mechanics to anyone. But access to a tool is not the same as the ability to use it. A chasm is growing between people who can harness AI to solve a hard problem and people who only consume the answers it hands them. The defining skill of the next decade will be orchestration: running several AI agents toward an outcome defined by the individual.

This raises an important question: Is AI in education a threat or an opportunity? My answer is that it is an opportunity, but only for

institutions willing to rebuild around the technology. That means overhauling assessment methods, because reproducing knowledge is no longer as important as demonstrating judgment and application skills. The key is to test whether a student can command and critique an AI system, rather than outsource thinking to it. With this shift, AI can become education's largest-ever scaling lever, providing personalized tutoring at near-zero marginal cost, simulation at scale, and instant feedback.

Consider the live drone-hack simulation that Ukraine's SET University, where I am president, ran with IronCyber, my cybersecurity startup. When applying AI, it was completed roughly six times faster. The technical layer can be compressed, but the orchestration layer cannot — a

reality that the old educational model, which was built to be AI-resistant, fails to grasp.

The university does not know its own value. Its campus, faculty, and academic programs are ostensibly its most prized assets. But in the digital era, data trumps all else. Every interaction a student has with a learning platform leaves a trace of their cognitive processing, speed of adaptation, and capacity to collaborate. Universities sit on terabytes of this information but do little with it.

All this points to the need for AI-native institutions. The dramatic death and rebirth of the edtech sector suggest that such a shift is already underway. The companies that simply moved lectures online are disappearing. The investors who once scaled some of Silicon Valley's most prominent tech firms are funding their replacements. Outsmart, launched by former Duolingo executives, has raised more than \$36 million from Khosla Ventures, Lightspeed, and DST Global on a single promise: to build "the university of the future."

Other powerful tech players who no longer trust universities have also started building alternatives. Tech billionaire Peter Thiel pays young people \$100,000 to drop out of school and launch startups. Y Combinator became a university of founders, compressing years of iteration into a few months. And yet, elite universities' real product was never education — MIT has given away lectures for two decades. It is the network. Four years in the same room builds social capital that

compounds for life. That, not the curriculum, is what people pay for.

It follows, then, that the future of the university rests on deliberately designing environments that foster strong connections — which almost no one is doing. Moreover, the focus should be less on the number of STEM — science, technology, engineering, and mathematics — graduates, and more on the pipeline from university to product. Many have fretted that China produces more STEM graduates than the US. But what sets China apart is the speed with which it turns research into innovation that people can use — a few years, compared with a decade or more elsewhere.

Most of the world treats education as a cultural mission to be improved at the margins, even though it has become a crucial determinant of strategic advantage. Why else would Canada, Germany, Singapore, and the UAE have fast-track visas to import tech workers that someone else paid to train? Developing talent for export is a subsidy to other economies. The question that should guide education reformers is how fast they can convert a person's knowledge into a country's gain, before someone else beats them to it.

• Iryna Volnytska, founder and CEO of cybersecurity startup IronCyber, is president of SET University, a Ukrainian tech institution that offers four master's programs and hosts an accelerator and two embedded startups. Courtesy: Project Syndicate

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

Sakeena Itoo lays foundation stone for development projects

Chairs district level farmers' awareness programme at D K Marg Kulgam

KT News Desk

KULGAM, JULY 18: Minister for Education, Health & Medical Education and Social Welfare, Sakeena Itoo, on Saturday presided over a district level farmers' awareness programme organised by the Department of Horticulture, Kulgam, under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture" (CSS-MIDH) at DK Marg in D.H. Pora.

The programme, as per an official statement, was organised to create awareness among the orchardists and farmers about modern horticultural practices, scientific interventions and various government schemes aimed at enhancing the farmers' productivity and income.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister stressed the need to provide farmers with proper technical guidance and continued institutional support to enhance productivity and improve livelihoods.

The Minister also inspected an exhibition comprising stalls



established by the Department of Horticulture and various allied departments. The stalls showcased departmental schemes, technological interventions and services available to the farmers while technical experts provided on-the-spot guidance and addressed field-level queries.

The participants were also briefed about the flagship schemes being implemented by the Department of Horticulture for the benefit of orchardists.

During the technical session, the experts from SKUAST-Kashmir apprised the participants of the University's research and extension initiatives for the farming community. They delivered an informative lecture on integrated insect pest management, emphasising scientific, eco-friendly and sustainable approaches for effective pest control in fruit crops.

The Department of Horticulture displayed a wide range of locally grown and

exotic fruits, quality planting material and different fruit varieties, highlighting Kulgam's rich horticultural potential.

An innovative Horticulture Help Desk was also established to provide technical guidance, grievance redressal and information on departmental schemes.

On the occasion, publication, "Building a Greener, Prosperous Kulgam," documenting the achievements made under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADD) during the last three years was released.

The Minister also listened to various public issues and demands raised by the people and assured them of appropriate redress.

Later, the Minister laid foundation stone for the Horticulture Development Office Complex and an additional classroom at Government Middle School Kounsarbal and Babapora.

During her visit, Sakeena Itoo also inaugurated Rapid Sand Filtration (RSF) Plant at Ahmadabad Trangzadoo.

Information Department's newly Posted Officers assume Office at JDI Kashmir

Shabir Ahmad Bhat assumes charge as FPO; Parvaiz Ahmad Lone takes over as Youth Information Officer

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: Following the recent reshuffle in the Information Department, Shabir Ahmad Bhat on Saturday, assumed charge as Field Publicity Officer (FPO), Kashmir, while Parvaiz Ahmad Lone assumed charge as Youth Information Officer, Kashmir, at the Joint Directorate of Information, Kashmir.

Joint Director Information Kashmir, Syed Shah Nawaz Bukhari, Deputy Director Information Headquarter Kashmir, Deputy Director, PR, Cultural Officer, Kashmir and other officials of the department welcomed both the officers on assuming their new assignments.

Soon after assuming charge, the newly appointed officers held an introductory meeting with the officials of their respective wings. They interacted with the staff and reviewed the functioning of the offices, besides taking stock of the on-going activities and outreach initiatives.

Calling for a collaborative



and result-oriented work culture, the officers urged the officials to work with renewed commitment and a sense of responsibility to further strengthen the department's outreach across Kashmir.

The officers assured the officials of their full support and cooperation in the efficient discharge of their responsibilities and stressed the importance of close coordination to strengthen the department's outreach across Kashmir.

Jammu administration cracks down on drug peddlers

KT News Desk

JAMMU, JULY 18: Under the directions of District Magistrate Jammu Dr Rakesh Minhas and in coordination with SSP Jammu Joginder Singh, joint teams of the District Administration and Jammu Police Saturday carried out a demolition drive against properties of drug peddlers in Jammu and Bishnah tehsils, dismantling several illegal structures built with proceeds of the drug trade.

With Saturday's combined operations at Bishnah and Nikki Tawi, the District Administration and Jammu Police demolished illegal properties worth a cumulative nearly 3 crore linked to drug trafficking, besides recovering heroin and illegal weapons from the accused.



DC Budgam stresses on adequate, uninterrupted portable water supply to people



KT News Desk

BUDGAM, JULY 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan Saturday asserted to ensure adequate portable water supply to the people across the District.

He said this while chairing a comprehensive review meeting to assess the distribution and rationalisation of potable water supply in Budgam.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner gave strict instructions for prompt redressal of portable water related issues, reported anyone in the district. He directed concerned to ensure adequate water supply in both rural and urban areas of the District.

Reviewing the existing water supply network, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need for equitable and adequate distribution of drinking water to ensure uninterrupted supply to all habitations, particularly during the ongoing summer season.

Expressing concern over the

issue of illegal tapping of water supply lines, the Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned officers to launch a comprehensive drive to identify and disconnect all unauthorized connections. He underscored that such illegal practices not only lead to significant water losses but also adversely affect the availability of potable water to genuine consumers.

The DC also instructed the officers to take strict measures to curb the misuse of treated drinking water for agricultural and other non-domestic purposes. He emphasized that potable water is a precious public resource and must be utilized judiciously for its intended purpose.

Officials were directed to strengthen monitoring mechanisms and initiate appropriate action against violators.

Stressing on quality work execution and timely completion, the chair also reviewed the progress of various works being executed under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and AMRUT 2.0 in the district.

DC Anantnag reviews disaster preparedness, directs high state of operational readiness

KT News Desk

ANANTNAG, JULY 18: In view of the adverse weather forecast issued by the Meteorological Department for next few days, Deputy Commissioner (Chairman District Disaster Management Authority) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat Saturday chaired a high-level emergency review meeting at Dak Bangalow, Khanabal.

The meeting was convened to assess departmental readiness, finalize precautionary measures, and establish a robust multi-sectoral response plan to mitigate risks arising from erratic weather patterns that may affect the district during the coming days.

CEO PDA, SDMs, SP, SES of Jal Shakti, PDD and PWD; CPO, CMO, CEO, Tehsildar Anantnag, Exens of PWD, Flood Control and PHE; DD F&ES, DySP SDRF, ARTO, DYSSO, CEO MCA, EOs of MCs, Representatives of BSNL, Jio and Airtel and other concerned officials attended the meeting.

At the outset, a detailed presentation of the District Disaster Management Plan was run to apprise the participants about historical occurrences of floods, cloudbursts, flash floods and other disaster like incidents. A thorough discussion on the vulnerable areas and critical locations was



held on the occasion.

With the MeT Department warning of potential flash floods, landslides, and rise in river water levels which may lead to inundation and water logging in vulnerable areas, the Deputy Commissioner directed all line departments to transition into a state of high alert and operational readiness to ensure public safety and minimal disruption to essential services.

The extensive review focused on deploying immediate preventive strategies, mapping and activation of resources like boats, ropes, evacuation centres, dewatering pumps and special vehicles, mobilisation of adequate manpower including volunteers and machinery, securing critical infrastructure, and ensuring minimal

communication lag during the upcoming inclement weather cycle.

The Police and SDRF were directed to pre-position rescue teams and quick-response forces near historically vulnerable zones and low-lying areas prone to sudden water logging.

Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) were instructed to immediately activate the field teams and establish robust contact networks with field level functionaries especially Patwaris, Police Officials, Numberdars and Chowkidars.

Special emphasis was laid on keeping back up plans ready to cater to any extra ordinary situation like internet and telecom breakdowns. SDMs were further asked to continuously monitor the developments in their jurisdictions and manage

DC Ganderbal reviews implementation of HADP, JKICP

KT News Desk

GANDERBAL, JULY 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore Saturday chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee (DLC) to review the implementation and progress of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) and the Jammu & Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture & Allied Sectors Project (JKICP) in the district.

During the meeting, the DC conducted a comprehensive department-wise review of progress under HADP and JKICP schemes. He reviewed the performance of all Agriculture and Allied Departments and directed the concerned departments to expedite the establishment of units against the allotted targets for the year 2026-27.

He further instructed the departments to ensure that all completed units are promptly updated and marked as established on the JKICP Portal.

The meeting also reviewed the department-wise progress of Output Tracking of established units under JKICP. Stressing the importance of timely monitoring and

evaluation, the DC directed the Departments of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Horticulture Planning & Marketing (HP&M) to complete the tracking of all remaining units on priority.

Reviewing the progress under the Daksh Kisan Portal, the DC directed all departments to intensify farmer registration, ensure timely enrolment of eligible beneficiaries and facilitate the completion of online training courses by registered farmers to strengthen capacity building and improve outreach under the programme.

The DC further took stock of the progress achieved under Kisan Khidmat Ghar (KKG) registrations, including L2 and L3 targets, and instructed all departments to accelerate registrations and improve overall performance to achieve the assigned targets within the stipulated timeframe.

He also reviewed the status of credit application cases under HADP and JKICP and directed all concerned banks to expedite the disposal of pending cases on priority so that the benefits reach eligible applicants without delay. Similarly, the progress under the Kisan

Credit Card (KCC) scheme was reviewed, and banks were instructed to clear all pending KCC applications at the earliest.

During the meeting, the District Level Committee (DLC) approved 162 cases under HADP and JKICP.

The DC emphasized close coordination among all stakeholder departments and financial institutions for effective implementation of HADP and JKICP. He stressed the need for continuous monitoring, timely execution of targets and prompt disposal of pending cases to ensure that the benefits of these flagship programmes reach eligible farmers and allied sector beneficiaries in a transparent and time-bound manner.

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, Chief Horticulture Officer, Assistant Director Fisheries, Cluster Head J&K Bank, Lead District Manager, Nodal Officer HADP/ JKICP, representatives of the concerned banks and officers of various Agriculture and Allied Departments.

SCERT strengthens Mathematics Education through Capacity Building Programme on Experiential Learning

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, JULY 18: Reinforcing its commitment to competency-based and learner-centric education, the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), J&K, Divisional Office Kashmir, Saturday successfully concluded a three-day Capacity Building Programme (CBP) on Experiential Learning in Mathematics.

The programme was organized by the Department of Education in Science and Mathematics, SCERT Divisional Office Kashmir, under the leadership of Syed Shabir Ahmad, Joint Director, SCERT, Divisional Office Kashmir.

The programme was designed in the cascading mode of professional development, wherein Master Resource Persons (MRPs) from various District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and Schools of Kashmir Division were trained to further conduct similar capacity-building programmes for Mathematics teachers in their respective districts. This multiplier approach is expected to ensure wider dissemination of innovative pedagogical practices and



strengthen classroom teaching across the Union Territory in line with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF).

Speaking on the occasion, Joint Director, SCERT Divisional Office Kashmir, appreciated the efforts of the Department of Education in Science and Mathematics for organizing the programme and reaffirmed SCERT's commitment to continuous professional development of teachers. He expressed confidence that the cascading approach would significantly enhance the reach and impact of experiential pedagogy, ultimately contributing to improved learning outcomes in

Mathematics across schools of Jammu & Kashmir.

The training programme was coordinated by Gulzar Ahmad Dar, Senior Academic Officer, SCERT J&K, who emphasized that experiential learning is central to developing conceptual understanding, critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving abilities among learners. He highlighted that the cascading model adopted by SCERT would enable the knowledge, skills and innovative teaching practices acquired during the programme to reach thousands of Mathematics teachers through district-level training initiatives.

The first technical session focused on Experiential Learning

in Mathematics, introducing participants to the principles of activity-based, inquiry-driven and competency-oriented teaching. The session highlighted practical classroom strategies for connecting mathematical concepts with real-life situations, thereby making learning engaging, meaningful and learner-centred.

The second session was conducted by Dr. Khalid, Lecturer in Mathematics, who demonstrated the pedagogical applications of Origami in Mathematics. Through interactive paper-folding activities, participants explored innovative approaches to teaching geometry, symmetry, fractions, measurement and spatial reasoning using simple, low-cost teaching-learning materials.

On the second day, Sheikh Bashir conducted an intensive hands-on session, providing participants with practical exposure to experiential classroom strategies. Through collaborative activities and classroom simulations, the participants learned to design engaging Mathematics lessons that promote exploration, logical reasoning and conceptual understanding.

Speaker visits fire-affected families at Pakherpora

Calls for immediate relief, damage assessment, rehabilitation measures

KT News Desk

Budgam, Jul 18: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, on Saturday visited Pakherpora in Budgam district to meet the families affected by the unfortunate fire incident that caused extensive damage to the residential houses and property.

Expressing profound grief over the incident, the Speaker interacted with the affected families, enquired about their well-being and assured them of all possible support during this difficult time.

During his visit, the Speaker directed the district administration to undertake an immediate and comprehensive assessment of the damage to residential houses, household belongings and other property so that the extent of the losses is accurately determined.

Taking note of the immediate hardships being faced by the affected families, whose houses have been rendered uninhabitable, the Speaker instructed the administration to make prompt arrangements for temporary



accommodation by providing tents and ensuring the supply of free ration and other essential relief material without delay.

The Speaker further emphasized that the damage assessment process should be completed on a priority basis to facilitate the timely disbursement of admissible relief and compensation to the affected families. He directed the concerned officers to ensure that no affected household is deprived of the assistance to which it is entitled.

Reiterating the commitment to the welfare of the affected families, the Speaker directed

the District Administration to extend immediate relief and all possible assistance, besides taking every necessary measure for their rehabilitation and restoring normalcy at the earliest.

SDM Chadoora, Executive Engineer R&B Charar-i-Sharief and BDO Phakerpora accompanied the Speaker during the visit.

The Speaker also visited the family of police personnel who lost his life in an accident at Bailey Bridge Chadoora to express his deepest condolences and sympathy with the bereaved family. He prayed for the strength to the family to bear this irreparable loss.



Ramdas Athawale, Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at Lok Bhavan on Saturday

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Nothing matches

platform of ideas, debates and knowledge exchange. Its identity is no longer confined to stalls and book launches; it has become a means to generate new ideas, encourage dialogue and empower youth. He said in past editions, workshops, panel discussions and literary conversations have given new energy to Jammu Kashmir's rich literary tradition.

"During this festival we have also witnessed an inspiring effort to revive our cultural heritage's priceless treasure, the Sharada script. We have seen the spirit of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat" take shape through initiatives such as Tamil-Kashmiri dialogues, and today this festival has become a strong bridge linking regions, languages and generations," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also emphasised that the success of a book festival should not be measured by sales figures.

"I believe the true success of any book festival lies in the ideas and conversations it generates. If a discussion that begins at this festival reaches a college or university, then our goal is successful. If a dialogue held here and the ideas that emerged during the festival become the basis for future collaborations, then I will consider the festival and its objectives successful. If a young person finds a book at this festival that changes the course of their life, that will be the greatest achievement of the Chinar Book Festival," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He urged youth to read at least one book beyond their textbooks every month, and he asked every young writer to resolve to write at least one page daily.

"Through the Chinar Book Festival we are ensuring that our children have roots to their identity as well as wings for future flight. I want to see this as a platform where local libraries and small-town book clubs also connect with the spirit of this festival, so that this celebration of knowledge reaches the public throughout the year and fosters exchanges among literary, musical and visual art forms, where words become voice, poetry takes color and stories become our shared experiences," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He visited various book stalls and interacted with the exhibitors. He released several publications in different languages. He also asked organisers to plan a similar book festival in Jammu

Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Prof. Milind Sudhakar Marathe, Chairman, National Book Trust; Ram Niwas Sharma, Commissioner Secretary, School and Higher Education; Yuvraj Malik, Director, National Book Trust; Dr Amit Wanchoo, Chief Convener, Chinar Book Festival; Dr. Mohammad Shams Eqbal, Director, National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language; eminent literary personalities, book lovers, youth and students in large number were present.

Dr Syed Darakhshan Andrabi, Chairperson, J&K Waqf Board; Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai, Vice Chancellor SKUAST Kashmir; Shri Brij Mohan Sharma, Principal Secretary Culture; Shri Akshay Labroo, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar; Dr. GV Sundeeep Chakravarthy, SSP Srinagar; heads of various educational institutions and senior officials also attended the Chinar Book Festival. (KNO)

LG to lead 'Mulaqat'

of "Mulaqat" will be held in Baramulla under the chairmanship of the Lieutenant Governor, following which the initiative will be extended to other districts of the Kashmir Valley.

"The programme will bring together religious leaders, civil society representatives, government officials, youth and the general public for meaningful dialogue aimed at strengthening peace, harmony and understanding," Farooq said.

The organisers said the platform will focus on encouraging dialogue among communities and creating greater awareness about the importance of tolerance, coexistence and social

unity. (KNO)

Srinagar records

MET PREDICTS WIDESPREAD RAINFALL FROM TODAY

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department said the prevailing hot and dry weather is likely to give way to widespread rain and thundershowers from July 19 to July 23.

According to the department, generally cloudy skies with intermittent spells of rain and thunderstorms are expected across the Union Territory during the period. A few places may witness intense showers, heavy rainfall and isolated torrential downpours, particularly during the late afternoon, evening and overnight hours.

The Met office has issued a warning for several districts, saying the risk of weather-related hazards will increase during the forecast period. Reasi and Udhampur districts are expected to receive heavy to very heavy rainfall, with isolated locations likely to experience extremely heavy rain.

Heavy to very heavy rainfall has also been forecast for parts of Jammu, Kathua, Samba, Rajouri, Doda, Ramban and Kishtwar districts.

Officials cautioned that the expected rainfall could trigger flash floods, landslides, mudslides, a sharp rise in water levels of rivers and streams, waterlogging in low-lying areas and localized flooding, particularly during periods of intense precipitation.

The weather is expected to improve from July 24, although a few places may continue to receive brief spells of rain or thundershowers till July 27.

The department has advised people to avoid unnecessary travel to vulnerable areas during heavy rain, follow official weather advisories and remain alert to changing conditions. Farmers have also been asked to suspend agricultural operations during the forecast period to minimize losses. (KNO)

Amarnath, Mata

carrying 1,008 pilgrims, departed at 2:40 a.m., while the Pahalgam-bound convoy, with 2,624 pilgrims, left at 3:12 a.m.

The batch travelled in 148 vehicles, including 82 buses, 17 medium motor vehicles (MMVs), 47 light motor vehicles (LMVs) and two two-wheelers.

The batch comprised 2,650 male pilgrims, 858 female pilgrims, 104 sadhus, 19 sadhis and one child. With this, the total number of pilgrims who have departed from the Jammu base camp for the ongoing Yatra has reached 1,12,760.

AMARNATH YATRA SUSPENDED TEMPORARILY

Meanwhile, authorities have temporarily suspended the Amarnath Yatra from both the Pahalgam and Baltal routes from Sunday, July 19, following an adverse weather forecast issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

According to an official statement, the decision has been taken as a precautionary measure to ensure the safety and well-being of the pilgrims.

"In view of the forecast of inclement weather over the next few days and considering the safety and well-being of the pilgrims, the Shri Amarnathji Yatra shall remain temporarily suspended from both the Pahalgam and Baltal routes with effect from July 19, 2026," the statement said.

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg said no onward movement of pilgrims will be allowed from the Baltal and Nunwan/Chandanwari base camps from Sunday.

The administration said the Yatra will resume only after a comprehensive assessment of weather conditions and confirmation that both routes are safe for pilgrims. Fresh updates regarding the resumption of the pilgrimage will be issued in due course.

SHRI MATA VAISHNO DEVI YATRA

SUSPENDED

Meanwhile, in view of the inclement weather advisory issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Yatra shall remain temporarily suspended as a precautionary measure to ensure the safety and well-being of pilgrims.

The decision has been taken in the interest of public safety following forecasts indicating unfavourable weather conditions in the region. Devotees are advised to cooperate with the authorities and avoid undertaking the pilgrimage until further orders.

Pilgrims are requested to remain updated through official communication channels for the latest information regarding the resumption of the Yatra. (KNO)

LG directs best

Shri Amarnathji Yatra pilgrims injured in the unfortunate road accident near Jakhani, Udhampur earlier this morning. Five pilgrims from Uttar Pradesh and a driver from Ganderbal sustained injuries and are currently undergoing treatment at GMC Udhampur. Senior officials have been directed to ensure all necessary assistance and the best possible medical care is provided for their swift recovery. I pray to Baba Barfani for the safety, well-being and smooth journey of all devotees."

Vikram-I success

to embrace science and innovation and contribute to India's journey as a global leader in space exploration."

NC leaders head

It had sent invitations to 52 political as well as religious personalities to participate in the protest programme. While the BJP declined the invitation and proposed to hold a Secretariat gherao on the same day, Kashmir-based smaller political parties like the PDP, PC, and others decided against participating on the grounds that the demands for the restoration of Article 370 and Article 35A have been ignored.

Top BJP leadership, including Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma, have also reached Kashmir to mobilize public support for its protest programme. (KNO)

Omar seeking

Conference (NC)."

He said, "Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is seeking restoration of statehood because the Abdullah family's royal lifestyle had been affected after the constitutional changes of August 2019 and that the demand is not for the people of Jammu and Kashmir."

The LoP said the BJP had never promised statehood to the Abdullah family but had committed to restoring it to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"We have made that commitment and we will restore statehood at the appropriate time," he said.

He said the ruling National Conference (NC) is using the statehood campaign to divert public attention from governance failures and unfulfilled election promises.

"The Abdullah family had been entrusted with power by the people for generations, but the present government has failed to fulfil the promises it made before the 2024 Assembly elections," he said.

Sharma said people continued to struggle for basic amenities, including electricity, drinking water, roads, schools and hospitals, while the government had become invisible on the ground.

"The promises made before the elections have been forgotten. After failing on every front, the Abdullah family has once again chosen to mislead the people by shifting the debate to statehood," he said.

PRESENT ARRANGEMENT HAS ENSURED PEACE

On the security situation, Sharma defended the Centre's decision to retain control over law

and order, saying the present arrangement had ensured peace and stability in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said there had been no civilian killings in the Union Territory during the past one-and-a-half to two years and that not a single local youth had joined terrorist ranks during the same period.

Sharma said that while cross-border infiltration and terrorism continued, Pakistan is attempting to push infiltrators into Jammu and Kashmir, while the local ecosystem that earlier supported terrorism stands dismantled.

He said that unlike previous years, when hundreds of local youths allegedly joined terrorist ranks annually, there had been no local recruitment in the recent past, which, reflected a significant decline in terrorism.

Sharma also said that if the Abdullah government had been given control over the police and security apparatus, the security situation could have deteriorated. "Law and order should remain with the Centre until terrorism is completely eradicated and the security situation stabilises further," he said.

The LoP said the BJP remains committed to restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir but asserted that the decision would be taken at an appropriate time, keeping in view national interest and the prevailing security situation. (KNO)

Smartphones replacing

gratification, making it increasingly difficult for children to concentrate, wait patiently or cope with frustration," he said.

Dr Guroo pointed out that India, home to the world's largest child population with nearly one in four citizens below the age of 18, is already witnessing the psychological consequences of uncontrolled smartphone use among young people.

He referred to findings from Indian studies, including a systematic review by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), which found that problematic mobile phone use among children and adolescents is consistently associated with anxiety, emotional and behavioural difficulties, poor sleep and impaired academic functioning. Earlier studies have estimated that nearly 39 to 44 per cent of adolescents display features of problematic smartphone use.

The psychiatrist said the concern is equally relevant in Kashmir, where research has reported high levels of smartphone and internet use among school-going adolescents. "Studies from the Valley have linked problematic smartphone use with poor sleep quality, anxiety, depressive symptoms, reduced concentration and declining academic performance. These findings closely reflect what mental health professionals are witnessing in clinical practice," he observed.

Dr Guroo, however, stressed that simply asking parents to reduce children's screen time is neither practical nor sufficient.

"Smartphones have become deeply integrated into education, communication, and even parenting. Many parents hand over phones because they are working, live in nuclear families or fear their children will be left behind socially or academically. Therefore, the solution cannot rest solely with families," he said.

Calling for a coordinated national response, he urged the government to formulate evidence-based guidelines on children's digital use, introduce age-appropriate regulations for social media platforms, enforce smartphone-free classrooms during teaching hours and incorporate digital well-being into school curricula.

He also called on technology companies to take greater responsibility by strengthening age verification systems, improving parental control features and limiting addictive design elements such as autoplay and endless scrolling for children.

Addressing parents directly, Dr Guroo

advised them to focus on creating healthy digital routines rather than relying on punishment.

He recommended delaying the introduction of personal smartphones for children for as long as possible, keeping phones away during meals, study time and at least one hour before bedtime, while encouraging sports, reading, outdoor play and hobbies.

"Children imitate what they see. The most effective parental control is a parent who demonstrates healthy digital habits," he said.

Concluding his message, Dr Guroo acknowledged that technology is an inseparable part of modern life but emphasised that childhood should not be sacrificed for convenience.

"Technology is here to stay, and children must certainly learn how to use it. But before we teach them to navigate the digital world, we must first teach them how to live in the real one. The real question is not whether children should use smartphones, but whether we, as parents, educators, policymakers and society, dare to place childhood before convenience," he said. (KNO)

Kashmir's premium

scientific orchard management practices and harvested at optimum maturity to preserve their exceptional taste, colour, firmness and shelf life.

Before export, the consignment underwent rigorous grading, sorting, packaging and cold-chain handling in compliance with international food safety and phytosanitary standards.

Abhishek Dev, Chairman, APEDA, said the export reflects APEDA's continued commitment to creating sustainable global market opportunities for Indian farmers.

"APEDA is committed to enhancing India's global agricultural presence by opening new markets and strengthening existing ones. Jammu & Kashmir is rapidly emerging as a hub for premium temperate horticultural produce, and exports such as these demonstrate the immense potential of the region," he said.

Dev added, "Our focus is to connect farmers with premium international markets through better quality, modern infrastructure, robust cold-chain systems and strategic market promotion. We remain committed to ensuring that more products from the Himalayan region find a place on global retail shelves."

Sehreena Maqbool, Regional Head, APEDA Jammu & Kashmir, described the shipment as another important step in transforming the Union Territory into a globally recognised source of premium fresh fruits.

"This achievement is the result of the collective efforts of growers, exporters, government agencies and APEDA. Building on the successful shipments to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the Singapore market further validates the superior quality of Kashmir's cherries and plums," Sehreena said. "Our endeavour is to create sustainable export opportunities that deliver better price realisation to farmers while encouraging export-oriented production, modern post-harvest management and adherence to international quality standards."

The Regional Head said that APEDA will continue to work closely with stakeholders to strengthen export infrastructure, facilitate market access, build capacity among growers and promote Jammu & Kashmir's premium horticultural produce in new global destinations.

The successful export is expected to encourage more orchardists to adopt international quality standards and export-oriented cultivation practices, enabling them to access premium markets and improve farm incomes.

With sustained support in quality enhancement, logistics, cold-chain development and international market promotion, Jammu & Kashmir is steadily positioning itself as one of India's leading exporters of premium temperate fruits to Southeast Asia, the Gulf and European markets. (KNO)

India's first pvt rocket Vikarm-1 succeeds in maiden orbital launch, carries diamonds, postcard by PM Modi

PTI

Sriharikota (Andhra Pradesh), Jul 18: In a defining milestone, Skyroot Aerospace on Saturday launched the country's first private orbital rocket and successfully placed multiple technology-demonstration payloads into the desired orbit, making India the third country with private orbital launch capabilities after the US and China.

The four-stage, seven-storey-tall Vikram-1 rocket lifted off majestically at 12.05 pm amid cloudy skies from the first launch pad of ISRO's Satish Dhawan Space Centre here, leaving behind plumes of orange smoke and marking a new era in the country's space missions.

The Hyderabad-based company, which carries the slogan - "Redefining access to space. Your fast track to the orbit. On-demand launch vehicle for rapid, precise, and customizable small satellite deployments"- on its website, described Saturday's mission 'Aagaman' (arrival) as a "grand success".

The rocket, named after Vikram Sarabhai, the father of India's space programme, also carried payloads that had postcards, including from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who called the mission a "defining moment" in the country's space journey. The postcards, loaded into specialised "payload lockers", were placed into Low Earth orbit (LEO).

It also carried two symbolic payloads -- Cosmic Bloom, an "artistic lab-grown diamond" in the shape of a lotus, and a tiny gold rocket with micro-sculptures of three of India's best-known space scientists -- Vikram Sarabhai, Sir CV Raman and former President APJ Abdul Kalam.

According to the company, the engineering data collected



during this test flight will be analysed to validate guidance and navigation systems and to guide future refinements for commercial satellite missions.

This historic milestone is also expected to strengthen India's position in the fast-growing global small satellite launch market, expanding the country's presence in space alongside ISRO.

A "planned hold" due to apparent navigation issues forced a revised launch time of 12.05 pm, as against the originally planned 11.30 am.

After its ascent, the primary payloads -- technology demonstrators from Grahya Space, Cosmoserve, DCubed, and Skyroot's SCOPE -- were sequentially deployed into a 450 km LEO.

The launch vehicle also successfully deployed a micro-art payload, an 18-karat gold rocket and a handwritten postcard from Modi bearing the message "Vande Mataram", along with postcards from engineers, scientists, and Indian astronauts.

"Skyroot proudly named its rockets and engines after these icons," the company said. Prime Minister

Modi hailed the successful launch, saying it proved the country's self-reliance push.

Speaking to the CEO and co-founder of Skyroot Aerospace, Pawan Kumar Chandana and co-founder Naga Bharath Daka over the phone, Modi congratulated them and their company for the successful feat achieved on Saturday.

The Prime Minister also told them that today's "Mission Aagaman" (arrival) should proceed further. The mission "proves we can be Atmanirbhar" (self-reliant), he said.

On his part, Chandana informed the Prime Minister that the rocket was completely designed and made in India.

Referring to Modi's postcard, Chandana said, "Your card has successfully reached orbit. Vande Mataram is in orbit."

Modi pointed out that the country was celebrating 150 years of the Vande Mataram, adding that the national song inspired many to live and die for the country.

"The growing participation of our private sector is opening new frontiers and

accelerating innovation. This achievement will encourage countless youngsters to dream bigger and innovate fearlessly," Modi said on X.

Chandana said, "We are very proud that the government has enabled us and opened up the sector to private players, and now we stand as India's first private company which has launched a rocket to orbit and also created a global milestone. All from India with a fully, fully Indian team, 100 per cent built in India."

Daka said India was the third country, after the US and China, with private sector launch capability.

ISRO chief V Narayanan hailed Modi for opening up the space sector for the start-up ecosystem of the country.

"In 2020, the space sector reform was announced. Today, within six years, a startup company has successfully placed a satellite in the first attempt in the orbit. It is really a great, satisfying moment," he said.

He also lauded the young team of Skyroot Aerospace, saying "it was said the average age is 28 years."

Govt's all-party meet ahead of session Wangchuk issue set to dominate agenda



PTI

New Delhi, Jul 18: The forcible removal of activist Sonam Wangchuk from Jantar Mantar, citing health concerns, is set to resonate during the all-party meeting convened by the government on Sunday.

This meeting, which will involve the floor leaders of all major parties, will discuss several pressing issues, including the alleged embezzlement of donations for the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Wangchuk's removal from the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) protest site at Jantar Mantar in central Delhi

by the city police will dominate the customary meet.

The alleged mishandling of donations at the Ram temple will also play a significant role in the proceedings. The Samajwadi Party has announced that it will obstruct House proceedings regarding this matter.

Additionally, the government has announced five new bills that will be introduced in the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha during the upcoming Monsoon Session. These include:

Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026: This bill amends the 1971 law to impose penalties for intentional

disruptions during the singing of "Vande Mataram."

Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2026: This introduces stricter regulations for delayed registrations.

Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2026: Replaces an ordinance to formalise tax exemptions for foreign investors in government securities.

Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026: Proposes raising the strength of Supreme Court judges from 34 to 38 judges, including the CJI.

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Amendment) Bill, 2026: Aims to restructure and strengthen the MSME sector. [1, 2, 6, 7, 8] Important pending and deferred legislation:

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026: Listed for passage after being stalled in the previous session.

Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025: Aims to unify higher education regulators, currently pending committee review.

130th Constitutional Amendment Bill: This proposal regarding the suspension of jailed officials was omitted from the agenda.

Amit Shah reviews border security at BSF post near Siliguri

Inaugurates projects worth Rs 77 crore

PTI

Siliguri (WB), Jul 18: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday reviewed security arrangements along the border fencing in the sensitive national boundaries in north Bengal and inaugurated development projects valued at Rs 77.06 crore for the BSF.

Shah had reached the Seema Chowki or the base of the BSF's 18th Battalion in the Jumagachh area of Fulbari border outpost in the fringes of the north Bengal town of Siliguri where he interacted with the paramilitary



personnel, visited a watch tower next to the fences and planted a sapling, according to an official statement.

The Union minister, who arrived on Friday evening in

Bagdogra on a three-day visit to the state -- his second in the current month -- attended the Prahari Sammelan of the BSF. He was accompanied at the base by Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari.

National awards: 'Article 370' best feature film

PTI

New Delhi, Jul 18: Bollywood movie "Article 370", based on the events surrounding the abrogation of this section of the Constitution in 2019, was on Saturday named as the best feature film at 72nd National Film Awards.

Yami Gautam Dhar, who acted in "Article 370" was named the best actress in a leading role while Malayalam superstar Mammotty and Kartik Aaryan shared the best actor award for their lead roles in "Bramayugam" (Malayalam) and "Chandu Champion" (Hindi) respectively.

Announcing the awards, chairman of the central jury Jayaraj said Telugu movie "Kalki 2898 AD" bagged the trophy for best popular film for wholesome entertainment.

Protecting environment a constitutional obligation, shared moral responsibility: CJI

PTI

Chandigarh, Jul 18: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Saturday said that environmental protection is both a constitutional obligation and a shared moral responsibility as he launched a tree plantation drive across Punjab, Haryana and the Union Territory of Chandigarh from here.

The campaign was inaugurated with the planting of a sapling at the Punjab and Haryana High Court premises in the presence of Acting Chief Justice Ashwani Kumar Mishra, judges of the high court and other dignitaries.

According to an official statement, the plantation drive will continue throughout the



monsoon season, with lakhs of saplings to be planted at court complexes, legal services institutions, judicial residential complexes and other suitable public places across Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh.

The initiative is being

undertaken in collaboration with the forest departments of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh, with emphasis on planting indigenous, fruit-bearing, medicinal and shade-giving tree species.

Addressing the gathering,

Justice Kant said environmental protection is both a constitutional obligation and a shared moral responsibility.

He urged citizens to actively participate in increasing the country's green cover by planting and nurturing trees. He said the success of the campaign should be measured not merely by the number of saplings planted but by their survival and growth through sustained care and community participation.

Referring to Articles 21, 48A and 51A(g) of the Constitution, the Chief Justice said safeguarding the environment is a shared responsibility and essential for ensuring a cleaner, greener and more sustainable future for coming generations.

Wangchuk shifted to hospital on court's directions; opp wants political spectacle: BJP



PTI

New Delhi, Jul 18: The BJP on Saturday justified the hospitalisation of activist Sonam Wangchuk on the 21st day of his indefinite hunger strike at Jantar Mantar here, saying it was done in compliance with a Delhi High Court direction that his health be monitored.

The ruling party also hit out at opposition parties, asking whether they would have preferred his health to deteriorate merely to sustain a "political spectacle".

Earlier in the day, the Delhi Police forcibly removed Wangchuk from Jantar Mantar and shifted him to Safdarjung Hospital, citing medical advice and directions of the Delhi High Court.

Responding to the development, BJP national spokesperson and former Union minister Shah Nawaz Hussain told PTI Videos that the high court had directed that Wangchuk's health be properly monitored.

"He has been admitted to the hospital for a medical examination to monitor his health and ensure that he remains healthy. That is the only reason," Hussain said.

BJP IT department head Amit

Malviya said the authorities acted with empathy, balancing the court's directions with the imperative of protecting life.

"Sonam Wangchuk's preliminary medical report is now in the public domain. Importantly, it records that the medical examination was conducted with his own consent," Malviya claimed in a post on X while sharing a purported medical report.

"So what exactly is the outrage about? Following the Delhi High Court's directions, the authorities shifted him to a hospital to facilitate his recovery after his health deteriorated during the fast," he said.

Targeting the opposition, Malviya asked, "Would the opposition have preferred that his condition worsen merely to sustain a political spectacle?"

"Ensuring timely medical care in a situation like this is the responsible course of action, not a matter for manufactured controversy," he added.

Several opposition leaders, including Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, slammed the Centre after activist Wangchuk was forcibly removed from Jantar Mantar.

Sensex, Nifty end week higher despite geopolitical tensions

IANs

New Delhi, July 18: The domestic equity market closed the week with modest gains, supported by upbeat corporate earnings and policy measures, even as investors remained cautious amid escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and a sharp rally in crude oil prices.

For the week, the Nifty advanced 127.4 points, or 0.5 per cent, while the Sensex gained 582.06 points, or 0.8 per cent, reversing the losses seen in the previous week.

Investor sentiment remained guarded after the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said it had carried out a fresh wave of offensive strikes against Iran on July 12, targeting multiple locations to degrade Tehran's ability to attack international



shipping passing through the Strait of Hormuz. The geopolitical tensions triggered a sharp rally in crude oil prices, with Brent crude climbing 15.91 per cent during the week to settle at \$88.10 per barrel. Despite the uncertainty, market sentiment

received support from a strong start to the first-quarter earnings season and the Union Cabinet's approval of two major manufacturing initiatives with a combined outlay of nearly Rs 1.9 lakh crore. Several blue-chip companies announced

their June quarter results during the week, including HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra, Wipro, Reliance Industries and Jio Financial Services.

Technology stocks remained in focus after TCS shares rallied following its quarterly earnings,

while Tech Mahindra gained after reporting an 8.2 per cent sequential rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 1,465 crore for the quarter ended June 30.

HCL Technologies also impressed investors after posting a 20.32 per cent year-on-year increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 4,624 crore in the first quarter of FY27.

However, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories remained under pressure for a second consecutive week after the pharmaceutical company said commercial supplies of its semaglutide product would be delayed due to an active pharmaceutical ingredient (API)-related quality issue.

Market volatility increased during the week, with India VIX rising 7.3 per cent as investors weighed geopolitical risks, elevated oil prices and the global interest rate outlook.

AFP

A site being qualified as heritage in danger, Assoumo said, was not a reprimand but a measure meant to help states "find funding, partners and attention" to



Also to be given priority are five castles in south Lebanon, an area under fire from Israel,

Also a potential candidate is

Two theaters built in the Amazon forest in Brazil and the Tunisian village of Sidi Bou Said might also be listed.

AFP

ade against Iranian ports. It has also been carrying out nightly airstrikes on targets in Iran aimed at weakening Tehran's abilities to monitor and threaten the strait.

AFP

They include “cooperation

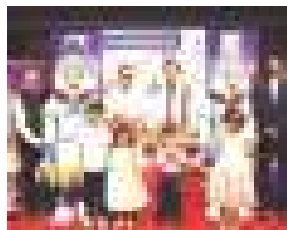
Iraq has long walked a tightrope between the competing influences of allies the United States and neighboring Iran.

PTI

In a letter to the Government of India, UCI President David Lappartient appreciated the remarkable scale of India's World Bicycle Day celebrations, noting that nearly 400,000 participants across around 10,000 locations took part in cycling events across the country.

PTI

Badminton Association of India (BAI) president and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma joined Mandaviya at the ceremony, where the official



mascot and anthem for the August 17-23 World Championships were unveiled. The anthem features India's entire 16-member squad, including two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu, Lakshya

"In the last two years, the country has hosted 36 international sporting events, and many more are scheduled. The BWF World Championships returning to India after 17 years is another important milestone.

AFP

The two countries signed a defense pact in 1997, when Russian President Vladimir Putin was in power.

Belousov saying Moscow was ready to sign a cooperation plan for the period 2027-2031.

Barring Root, England batters have not done much to write home about and would

PTI

Vintage Rohit is all about effortlessly executing his front foot pull shots off the pacers and manoeuvring the spinners but the 39-year-old has not been able to find any fluency thus far in the series, fuelling conversations about lasting till the 2027 ODI World Cup in South Africa.



Movies SCHEDULE

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05:35 PM, 07:15 PM

HINDI - 10:45 AM



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