



Today's young India more educated, ambitious: LG Sinha

Says true leadership carries everyone together, treats public welfare as highest duty

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Aug 08: Asserting that today's young India is more educated, more advanced, more connected, and more ambitious than any previous generation, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday said that true leadership rises above the boundaries of caste, religion, and region, carries everyone together, and treats public welfare as its highest duty.

Addressing the convocation ceremony of the 9th batch and the induction of the 10th batch of the Indian Institute of Democratic Leadership (IIDL), an initiative of Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini, Mumbai, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Today's young India is more educated, more advanced, more connected, and more ambitious than any previous generation. It has new ideas, capability, and energy. You will have to create roadmaps based on shared growth, equal opportunity, and the larger goals of nation-building. A new India, rapidly moving through urbanisation, climate change challenges, and rising aspirations, is looking for such young leaders who can solve complex problems and contribute to making policies that can transform people's lives. I want you to always remember that the greatest strength of democracy is the trust of the people, and trust



is built through dialogue, consensus, and inclusion."

He said, "True leadership rises above the boundaries of caste, religion, and region, carries everyone together, and treats public welfare as its highest duty."

The Lieutenant Governor said the convocation is a convergence of two important journeys, one reaching completion, and another beginning with new energy and hopes.

He congratulated the graduating students of the 9th batch, who now step into diverse fields of public life, and warmly welcomed the 10th batch, who begin their journey of learning with enthusiasm and aspirations.

The Lieutenant Governor

expressed confidence that the Institute would continue to enrich young leaders with constitutional values, discipline and wisdom.

Highlighting the journey of Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini since its establishment in 1982, the Lieutenant Governor said it made immense contribution to leadership training and capacity building.

"With over 60,000 parliamentarians, legislators, panchayat representatives, entrepreneurs, and youth trained, the institution has played a pivotal role in strengthening governance and entrepreneurship. The creation of IIDL further ensured that India's democratic institutions | [More on P6](#)

J&K power distribution utilities push for 5% increase in tariff across all categories

KPDCL, JKPDC petition JERC for determination of tariff

Riyaz Bhat

Srinagar, Aug 08: Jammu & Kashmir's two power distribution utilities—Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) and Jammu Power

Development Corporation Limited (JPDC)—have proposed a five percent hike in electricity tariff across all consumer categories for the financial year 2026–27.

In their separate petitions submitted to the Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) for J&K and Ladakh, both utilities have proposed five percent increase in basic tariff.

"The Petitioner has conveyed its proposal regarding tariff revision for the proposed sub-categories at 5% across the board, along with



J&K Government commitment towards subsidy support. Accordingly, the petitioner has requested the Commission to determine the subsidized tariff in accordance with the applicable provisions of law and the relevant Tariff Regulations," reads the petitions.

The KPDCL and JPDC have

also sought rationalization of tariff categories, proposing to reduce the number of categories from 13 to 8 and sub-categories from 47 to 22.

"The Petitioner submitted that, in compliance with the Revised Results Evaluation Framework of KPDCL—Part IV (Policy and Structural

Reforms, Sub-part (2), Tariff Rationalization)—it has proposed reducing the number of tariff categories from 13 to 8 and sub-categories from 47 to 22," the petitions read.

The JERC has conducted public hearings on the matter and is expected to take a final call soon on the matter.

President of the Federation Chamber of Industries Kashmir (FCIK), Shahid Kamili, told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the chamber strongly opposed the proposed tariff hike during the public hearing.

"They have proposed a five percent increase in the basic tariff, but we opposed it. How can industries survive when you increase tariffs in the absence of incentives and marketing support from the government?" Kamili asked. (KNO)

President confers National Handloom Award on two Kashmiri Master Weavers

Joint entry wins citation, cash prize of ₹2.5 lakh

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Aug 08: The Handicrafts and Handloom Department, Kashmir, has extended heartiest congratulations to two outstanding weavers, Manzoor Ahmad Hajam and Fayaz Ahmad Wani, from Kanihama, Budgam, who have been conferred with the prestigious National Handloom Award, in recognition for their contribution in the field of Kani weaving.

They were conferred with the National Award for their joint entry – Chand-Daar Kani Shawl – by the President of India, Draupadi Murmu, during a glittering function held at New Delhi, to commemorate the National



Handloom Day.

In a press release issued here today, a spokesman of the Handicrafts and Handloom Department, stated that this honour is a fitting tribute to invaluable contribution of Manzoor Ahmad Hajam and Fayaz Ahmad Wani, who have

distinguished themselves in the indigenous art of Kani weaving. "By winning such prestigious award, the master weavers have brought the Kani weaving technique on the forefront of the crafts sector, which will surely open up new vistas of business opportunities for | [More on P6](#)

Inclement weather: Amarnath Yatra to remain suspended from today

BRO takes up repair work of tracks

Over 4.8 lakh pilgrims pay obeisance

Chadi Mubarak to mark culmination on Aug 28

Umaisar Gull Ganie

Srinagar, Aug 08: The Amarnath Yatra-2026 will remain suspended from August 9 on both the Pahalgam and Baltal routes in view of recent rains, vulnerable stretches of the pilgrimage tracks requiring repairs and maintenance, and the forecast of adverse weather conditions over

the next few days.

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, the decision had been taken keeping in view the condition of the Yatra tracks as well as the weather forecast issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

"In view of the recent rains, a necessity for the repair and maintenance of the Yatra tracks at vulnerable stretches has been felt," Garg said, adding that the restoration work was being undertaken by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

Officials told KNO that no fresh Yatra convoy was allowed to leave the Bhagwati Nagar base camp in | [More on P6](#)

Sewage, waste threaten Manasbal Lake as CPCB confirms severe water pollution

5 locations fall under Class-D standards | Lar Canal records highest faecal-coliform levels

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Aug 08: The picturesque Manasbal Lake in Ganderbal district is witnessing serious pollution, with all seven water samples collected by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) failing to meet the prescribed Class-B standards and high levels of faecal and total coliform detected at several locations.

The findings, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), submitted before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) have raised fresh concerns over the deteriorating health of one of Kashmir's important freshwater wetlands and a source



of drinking water for thousands of people in adjoining areas.

The CPCB conducted the assessment on April 4, 2026, along with officials of the J&K Pollution Control Committee and the Wullar-Manasbal Development Authority (WMDA), following directions from the NGT in a case

filed by environmental activist Raja Muzaffar Bhat.

Seven samples were collected from four locations in Manasbal Lake, two natural springs along its periphery and the Lar Canal, which flows into the lake.

According to the CPCB report, none of the samples met Class-B criteria prescribed for

organised outdoor bathing.

Five locations -- four in the lake and one in the Lar Canal -- were categorised under Class-D, which denotes water suitable for propagation of wildlife and fisheries.

Only one of the spring samples met Class-C criteria, under which water can be used as a drinking water source after conventional treatment and disinfection. The other spring sample did not qualify under Classes A, B, C or D.

The results have highlighted particularly high levels of microbiological contamination.

At the southern portion of the lake near Kondabal, faecal coliform was recorded at 780 MPN per | [More on P6](#)

Rain lashes Kashmir parts, more showers forecast till Aug 17

MeT predicts heavy rainfall in parts of Jammu division from Aug 9-11

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Aug 08: Rain lashed parts of Kashmir on Saturday as the Meteorological Centre here forecast light to moderate showers and thundershowers at many places in Jammu and Kashmir over the coming days.

According to the daily weather bulletin issued by the India Meteorological Department, Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 26.1 degrees Celsius and received 1.6 mm of rainfall in the 24 hours ending 8:30 am on Saturday.

Qazigund received 3.6 mm of rainfall, while Pahalgam, Kokernag, Gulmarg and Jammu recorded 1.4 mm, 3.8 mm, nil and 3.6 mm, respectively. Banihal recorded 4.3 mm, Batote 2.8 mm, Katra 4.8 mm and Bhaderwah 8.2 mm during the period.

The weather office, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said one or two spells of light to moderate rain or thundershowers are likely at many places on August 9, with brief intense showers possible at a few places.

From August 9 to 11, a few spells of light to moderate rain or thundershowers are expected at most places, with heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at a few districts of the Jammu division and brief intense heavy showers at a few places in the Kashmir division.

The MeT has also forecast the possibility of light rain or thundershowers at many places between August 12 and 17, with brief intense showers possible at a few locations.

It advised people to remain cautious as torrential rain and brief intense heavy showers could trigger flash floods and landslides at vulnerable places besides causing waterlogging in low-lying areas.

The weather department has particularly | [More on P6](#)

J&K food safety enforcement: Over 4,000 samples found non-conforming in five years

Over 56,000 samples analysed from 2021-22 to 2025-26; thousands of cases decided with penalties

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Aug 08: Jammu and Kashmir authorities analysed 54,169 food samples during the five-year period from 2021-22 to 2025-26, of which 4,995 were found non-conforming, while thousands of civil cases were decided with penalties, according to data furnished by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the Lok Sabha.

As per the State/UT-wise data provided by the Ministry,

accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), J&K analysed 6,546 food samples during 2025-26, of which 664 were found non-conforming. During the period, 1,368 civil cases were decided with penalty, while 14 convictions were recorded. The ministry noted that the 2025-26 data is provisional and subject to revision based on further laboratory testing and court proceedings.

In 2024-25, J&K analysed 6,955 samples, of which 651



were found non-conforming. As many as 1,239 civil cases were decided with penalty,

while 29 convictions were recorded.

The data further shows that

9,057 samples were analysed in J&K during 2023-24, with 750 found non-conforming. During the year, 1,612 civil cases were decided with penalty and 22 convictions were recorded.

In 2022-23, authorities analysed 13,502 food samples in J&K, of which 1,195 were found non-conforming. A total of 1,592 civil cases were decided with penalty, while 15 convictions were recorded.

During 2021-22, J&K analysed 8,109 samples, with 1,735 found

non-conforming. The year witnessed 1,931 civil cases being decided with penalty, while four convictions were recorded.

Taken together, the data shows that J&K analysed 54,169 samples during the five-year period, with 4,995 samples found non-conforming. A total of 7,742 civil cases were decided with penalty, while 84 convictions were recorded during the period.

The Ministry said food safety enforcement and implementation of the Food Safety and

Standards Act, 2006 is primarily the responsibility of State/UT Food Safety Authorities, which undertake surveillance, monitoring, inspections, targeted enforcement drives and sampling activities.

Meanwhile, the State-wise data on Food Safety Officers shows that Jammu and Kashmir has 101 sanctioned posts, of which 79 are filled while 22 posts are vacant.

The Ministry said matters related to vacancies of Food Safety Officers | [More on P6](#)

SKIMS SFC Meeting

CS Atal Dulloo assures support to achieve excellence in patient care, research, medical education

Sets vision to transform SKIMS into Quaternary Care Hub

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 8: Marking a significant administrative milestone and providing a fresh impetus to long-pending developmental initiatives, the Standing Finance Committee (SFC) of Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura, met after a gap of over five years under Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, setting a clear vision for transforming the premier medical institution into a quaternary healthcare facility and Centre of Excellence in the region.

The last meeting of the Standing Finance Committee had been held in August 2021. The revival of the high-level financial and administrative mechanism is expected to accelerate critical infrastructure projects, strengthen institutional capacities and provide a renewed roadmap for the future growth of SKIMS.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Shailendra Kumar, Financial Commissioner (Additional Chief Secretary), Finance; M. Raju, Commissioner Secretary, Health & Medical Education; Prof. (Dr.) Mohd. Ashraf Ganie, Director, SKIMS & EOSG; Prof. (Dr.) Fazal Q. Parray, Principal, SKIMS Medical College, Bemina; and a representative of the Planning Department.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Secretary called upon the SKIMS administration to set a higher institutional benchmark by transforming the institute into a quaternary healthcare facility and a Centre of Excellence for medical institutions across the region.

He assured that the Government would extend all



possible support to SKIMS for upgrading its capacities in super-speciality healthcare, advanced medical technologies, medical education and cutting-edge research, in line with the original mandate and vision behind establishment of the premier institution.

The Chief Secretary stressed the need for an all-round transformation of patient-care services, with SKIMS adopting the latest technologies, treatment protocols and medical practices evolving globally.

He maintained that the institute has to be several notches higher in its approach, infrastructure and facilities to meet the emerging healthcare requirements of the region, emphasizing that the institution must continuously benchmark itself against the best national healthcare facilities.

He directed the SKIMS administration to prepare a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening patient care, infrastructure, equipment, human resources and specialized services, with the objective of ensuring that patients from Jammu and Kashmir do not have to travel outside the region for

advanced and highly specialized treatment. The Chief Secretary further emphasized strengthening SKIMS as a Centre of Excellence in medical education and research, particularly in areas such as cancer and other diseases of growing prevalence in the region. He called for greater focus on research-driven healthcare solutions and creation of a pool of highly skilled medical professionals capable of addressing emerging health challenges.

He maintained that access to quaternary-level healthcare should be expanded so that people can avail advanced treatment facilities closer to their homes, irrespective of their socio-economic status.

Financial Commissioner (ACS), Finance Department, Shailendra Kumar, expressed strong commitment towards supporting an institution of the stature and strategic importance of SKIMS.

He emphasized the need for SKIMS to pursue administrative excellence, financial sustainability and greater institutional self-reliance, while continuously setting higher benchmarks in specialized and high-end patient care. Commissioner

Secretary, Health & Medical Education Department, M. Raju, appreciated the efforts of the SKIMS leadership towards strengthening the institute's performance in patient care, academics and research. He reiterated the importance of sustained institutional growth to meet the evolving healthcare requirements of the people.

Earlier, Director SKIMS, Prof. (Dr.) Mohd. Ashraf Ganie, presented a comprehensive vision for institutional expansion, outlining measures for strengthening tertiary and quaternary healthcare, augmenting specialized human resources, upgrading infrastructure and integrating modern medical technologies.

Highlighting SKIMS's pivotal role as the apex healthcare institution of the region, he presented key performance indicators reflecting the institute's extensive service delivery, including lakhs of outpatient visits, thousands of inpatient admissions, complex surgical procedures and a large volume of laboratory and radiological investigations undertaken during the year.

The Committee held detailed deliberations on a range of strategic priorities

aimed at accelerating the overall development of the institution. It gave a detailed consideration to accord necessary clearances to several critical infrastructure and service-expansion initiatives, including augmentation of Emergency Services through a dedicated Emergency Block, establishment of a Trauma Care Centre and Organ Transplant Unit, and creation of a dedicated OPD Block to cater to the large number of patients seeking outpatient care at SKIMS every day.

The Committee further approved the creation of requisite posts for the effective functioning of the State Cancer Institute, besides strengthening the Departments of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery (CVTS), Nursing and Medical Technology. In a move aimed at strengthening professional training and practical exposure, the Committee also gave the go-ahead for introducing internship programmes for B.Sc. and M.Sc. Nursing students, providing them with structured clinical experience and opportunities to further hone their skills and expertise. The Committee reiterated the Government's firm commitment to providing requisite administrative and financial support for timely implementation of priority projects and institutional expansion plans.

The meeting is expected to provide renewed momentum to the development of SKIMS and strengthen its position as a leading regional hub for advanced healthcare, medical education and biomedical research, with the long-term objective of placing the institution among the leading centres of excellence in the country.

Government notifies legal metrology GATC rules to promote ease of Doing Business in J&K

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 08: Another major reform has been brought in by the Government of Jammu & Kashmir in Legal Metrology by notifying the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Metrology Government Approved Test Centre (GATC) Rules, 2026. These rules are aimed at promoting Ease of Doing Business in J&K.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir introduced a landmark reform by notifying the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Metrology (Government Approved Test Centre) Rules, 2026. Government Approved Test Centres (GATC) are private entities who will be authorized by the Department to verify 12 specified categories of weights and measures. The verification fee for each of these categories of weights and measures is prescribed under the said rules.

Procedure for establishment of GATCs and qualification for being eligible to establish a GATC are also provided in these rules. GATCs and the UT Government will share the revenue @ 80 : 20 basis. GATCs

are aimed at enhancing the outreach of the Department to cover untapped weights and measures and provide traders an option of private laboratories for getting the specified weights and measures verified from them.

These reforms, as per an official statement, build upon the recently launched initiatives including the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026, increasing periodicity for re-verification of specified weights and measures through amendments in the Legal Metrology (General) Rules, 2011, business de-regulation in certain key areas and online service delivery mechanism through J&K Single Window System.

Pertinently, these measures address the key issues which have been pending from years. A strong legal foundation is expected to help the Department in enforcing the Legal Metrology Act, 2009 and the rules made there under in a fare and fearless manner thereby gaining trust of both business community as well as the consumers

Independence Day Celebrations Cultural Unit Srinagar organises multiple programmes



KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 08: The Cultural Unit Srinagar of Information Department organised various programmes in different schools of Srinagar to mark the Independence Day Celebrations, 2026.

The activities, as per an official statement, held at GHS Harwan, GBHSS Jawaharnagar and GBHS Brane, included competitions in Painting, Speech, Quiz and Singing, providing young students a meaningful platform to express their patriotism, creativity and reverence for the nation and the sacrifices of its freedom fighters. The students

participated with remarkable enthusiasm and wholehearted involvement, adding vibrant patriotic fervour to the celebrations.

The initiatives aimed at nurturing patriotic consciousness among young minds and acquainting them with the values of freedom, unity, sacrifice and national integrity.

The Cultural Officer Kashmir and AECO appreciated the spirited involvement of the students and expressed gratitude to the school authorities for their valuable cooperation and support, which contributed to the successful conduct of the programmes.

IFAD Project Partners' Learning Forum Day 2 focuses on field-based learning, women led FPOs

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 8: The second day of the IFAD Project Partners' Learning Forum 2026, organised by the Mission Directorate, HADP/JKICP under the Agriculture Production Department, was dedicated to field-based learning and first-hand exposure to successful models of farmer collectivism, women-led agricultural enterprises and modern horticulture. The field visit programme, as per an official statement, provided an opportunity to delegates from IFAD-assisted projects across the country to experience the implementation of agricultural interventions on the ground and interact directly with the farmers, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and other stakeholders.

The delegation's first visit was to Umeed Women Fresh Vegetables Kolina Producer Company Limited at Nilsar, Sultanpura, Baramulla, an all-women FPO with 617 members. The participants interacted with the Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officer and FPO members and visited the production and aggregation facilities.

The interaction focused on the FPO's business operations, marketing, value addition and future

growth plans. The visit provided an important opportunity to understand how women-led farmer collectives can evolve into viable and market-oriented rural enterprises. The FPO deals primarily in commodities including garlic, red chilli, basil seed and shallot. The delegates, later, visited a High-Density Horticulture Farm at Khonmoh, Srinagar, where they interacted with the beneficiary farmer and witnessed high-density apple plantation and fruit-picking activities. The farm, spread over 12 kanals with around 1,920 plants, offered the participants a practical insight into modern orchard systems and the potential of high-density horticulture to enhance productivity and improve the commercial viability of apple cultivation.

Speaking on the significance of the field visits, Mission Director, HADP/JKICP, Dr. Sagar D. Dattatray, said that the true value of a learning forum lies in connecting the policy and programme discussions with experiences from the field. He emphasised that the visits to the women-led FPO and the high-density orchard demonstrated how institutional support, farmer collectivism, technology and modern production practices can translate into tangible livelihood opportunities.

Training on digital literacy, market readiness for artisans conducted in Budgam

KT News Desk

BUDGAM, AUGUST 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, Saturday said that the digital integration of artisans including specially-abled craftsmen is opening new economic opportunities for craftsmen and is strengthening the handicrafts sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said this while appreciating the "Training on Digital Literacy & Market Readiness" programme organised at Town Hall, Budgam, describing it as an inspiring example of convergence aimed at empowering the artisan community.

The training was organised in collaboration with Special Hands of Kashmir under Artisan 2.0, a Conserve initiative for Artisans of Kashmir.

Addressing the participants, the Deputy Commissioner said the future of handicrafts is bright, asserting traditional craftsmanship is effectively integrated with technology and modern market practices.

"The digital integration will ensure artisans and weavers get better and rightful economic opportunities for their dedication and hard work against growing demand and value for quality handmade products," the DC observed.

IN THE COURT OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1st CLASS SOPORE

In the case of: Tanveer Ahmad Bhat S/o: Ab Rashid Bhat R/o: Achabal.

VERSUS
C.E.O Municipal Council Sopore/BDO Sangrama/BDO Sopore
(Registrar of Birth and Death)

...Non Applicant

NOTICE TO PUBLIC AT LARGE

Whereas, the above titled case is under process in this court, seeking direction therein to the non-applicant u/s 13(3) of the Registration of Births & Deaths Act, 1969 for registration of Birth event of the applicant's Daughter namely Fatima Tanveer D/o: Tanveer Ahmad Bhat as 27-05-2018 at M.C.H Sopore.

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

Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Sopore

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR JAMMU AND KASHMIR SERVICES SELECTION BOARD

Muthi, Akhnoor Road, Jammu/ZamZam Complex Rambagh, Srinagar
(www.jkssb.nic.in)

NOTICE

Subject: Instructions for submission of application forms for the advertised (72) posts of Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.

The J&K Services Selection Board, vide Advertisement Notification No. 07 of 2026 dated: 08.07.2026, has advertised 72 posts in Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction for inviting application from eligible candidates, who are in possession of a valid Domicile Certificate and other eligibility conditions as mentioned in the Advertisement Notification.

The aspirants can submit the application forms through the online portal of JKSSB as per the following details:

Submission of Application Forms	Last Date for receiving Fee Online
10.08.2026 (12:00 AM)	10.08.2026 (12:00 AM)
to	to
08.09.2026 (11:59 PM)	08.09.2026 (11:59 PM)

The necessary instructions for filling up of online applications in this regard are as under:

- Candidates are required to apply through online mode only, by accessing the website of JKSSB www.jkssb.nic.in. No other means/mode of application will be accepted.
- All the candidates shall be required to register on the Portal by clicking on "Log-in (Apply on Various Posts)" tab available on the Board/JKSSB website.
- Candidates are required to have a valid e-mail ID and Mobile Number for registering by clicking on "New User / Sign Up" and creating login credentials. The same shall be validated using OTP (One Time Password)

based verification on e-mail and if the verification code is not working, the candidates are required to resend the verification code for account activation by clicking on "Get Activation Code".

Candidates are advised to use their username only, generated while registration of their application form or received with the account activation mail instead of their e-mail ID.

After registering/creating login credentials, the candidates shall complete their OTR (One-Time Registration) form. After the completion of OTR form, the candidates shall click on "Active Advertisement" tab and then click on "Apply" tab for submitting the application form for the advertised posts.

The candidates shall carefully fill in all correct information in various columns and click on "SAVE & CONTINUE".

Candidates are advised to upload their Live Photograph as per details mentioned in Annexure-"A".

A clear Signature of the candidate shall be uploaded with following specifications:

Size of Signature (Max size- 10 KB to 20 KB) (H.X W=1.5 X 3.5 cms).

A valid (within cut-off date) and genuine Category Certificate shall be uploaded with the following specifications: (Max size- 100 KB in pdf format).

Valid (within cut-off date) and requisite Qualification Certificate(s) shall be uploaded with the following specifications: (Max size- 100 KB in pdf format). Candidates are advised to upload the essential qualifications/experience (if any) certificates as required for the respective post(s).

The candidate shall ensure that all the required fields are filled up with correct information, before final submission of the application form. Once submitted, the Application Form cannot be edited by the candidates. They shall be personally responsible for filling the details in the Online application form and the information/details furnished by the candidates shall be treated as final for the purpose of determining the eligibility/claims of the candidates. No claim on account of wrong/non-filing of information shall be entertained subsequently. Benefits related to category, weightage etc. shall be claimed only upon filing of same in the application form and the possession of the valid, within the cut-off date certificate to this effect and no such claim shall be entertained at any subsequent stage.

Candidate's Application will be considered incomplete if fee is not paid for that application form. Fees shall be paid only by Net banking/Debit Card/UPI/Credit Card Options:

> After successful completion of the form, the candidates shall be shown "Pay Now" link for making the online application fee payment. Candidates are advised to check the status of the fee as "Submitted" on their dashboard.

> The options will be available after clicking on Pay Now link. Candidate can pay using Net banking, Debit Card, UPI, Credit Card, as Online Payment options.

No hard copy or print out of the filled application form is required to be submitted by the candidates, except at the stage of DV, only in respect of the short-listed candidates, after the conclusion of the examination. However, In-service candidates shall submit print out of filled online application form along-with duly filled, signed and stamped Certificate given at last paragraph of the application form through proper channel (TPC).

Candidates must include the Payee name and Account Number while submitting payment representations to this department/office.

The application fee/payment should be successfully submitted by the closing time strictly. As such, candidates are advised in their own interest to submit online applications much before the closing date and not to wait till the last date to avoid the possibility of disconnection/inability or failure to login to the online application portal on account of heavy load on the website during the closing days.

Candidates are advised to submit their representations regarding any queries related to submission of online application form through online mode only at the given below e-mail address-

a) Official e-mail viz ssbik-grievance@JK.gov.in

b) Helpdesk/ Landline of JKSSB — 0191-2461335 (Jammu) 0194-2435089 (Srinagar)

Helpdesk/ Landline of NIC — 9107706766

DIPK-4314/26

Khurshid Ahmad Sanai JKAS, Srinagar J&K Service Selection Board.

No. JKSSB-PLAN/17/2025-06 (E-7817791) Dated: 07.08.2026

DATED: 08-08-2026

Urs of Makhdoom Sahib (RA) observed with traditional fervour

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Aug 08: All roads lead towards Koh-e-Maran on Saturday as thousands of devotees gathered at the historic Makhdoom Sahib Shrine in Srinagar to mark the Urs Mubarak of revered Sufi saint, "Sultan-ul-Arifeen" Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom (RA), popularly known as Ma-khdoom Sahib (RA).

The city wore a different rhythm through the day, as men, women, children and elderly devotees made their way towards the shrine.

The usual bustle of Srinagar's markets and old-city lanes was joined by groups of devotees heading towards Koh-e-Maran, some with families, some with friends and many elderly devotees who have been making the annual visit for years.

For several families, the Urs is not simply an annual religious gathering but a tradition passed from one generation to another.

"I have been coming here since I was young. Earlier, my father used to bring me. Now I bring my children," Za-hoor Ahmad said.

Another devotee, Mukhtar Khan from Budgam said the annual gathering had become a part of his family's



life. "We wait for this day every year. You meet people here, offer prayers and remember Makhdoom Sahib. It gives you a different kind of peace," he said.

With prayer beads in their hands and skull caps on their heads, elderly men slowly made their way through the crowds, while children walked alongside their parents and grandparents.

Some stopped along the way to rest before continuing towards the shrine, while others sat quietly in corners, reciting prayers. By evening, the area

around the shrine had turned into a sea of people, with a steady movement of devotees continuing as prayers, Quranic recitations and supplications filled the air.

The night before had witnessed a Shab Majlis, with devotees staying awake for hours in prayer and remembrance. The spiritual atmosphere continued through the day as people offered special prayers and sought blessings at the revered shrine.

"For us, this is not just about coming to the shrine for one day. This is

something we have seen our elders doing, and we want our children to know the same tradition," Mannan, a young devotee from Habba Kadal, Srinagar, said.

For many, the Urs is not simply a date on the religious calendar. It is a return to memories and a return to the place where they came with their parents as children and where many now bring their own children.

It is important to mention that Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Ma-khdoom (RA), one of Kashmir's most revered Sufi saints, is remembered for his teachings on spirituality, humility, compassion, morality and service to humanity.

Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir Dr Moulvi Muhammad Umar Farooq paid tributes to Hazrat Makhdoom Sahib (RA), saying the saint dedicated his life to the spiritual and moral transformation of the people.

"Hazrat Makhdoom Sahib (RA) played an important role in spreading the message of Islamic teachings, humanity, morality, compassion and a righteous way of life," he said.

Mirwaiz urged people to follow the teachings and character of the revered saint and contribute towards building a society based on welfare, mutual cooperation and moral values—(KNO)

CM Omar Abdullah meets MLAs

Unveils Kashmir Super League jersey



KT News Desk

Srinagar, Aug 08: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday met MLA Bani Dr Rameshwar Singh and MLA Lal Chowk Sheikh Ahsan Pardesi at Raabita here, who apprised him of various matters concerning their respective constituencies.

The Chief Minister discussed the issues raised by the legislators and assured that matters pertaining to

public welfare and development would receive due consideration.

Later, the Chief Minister met a delegation led by Kashmir Super League (KSL) Organizer Mushtaq Bashir, which apprised him of plans for the upcoming Kashmir Super League 2026 in Srinagar.

On the occasion, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah unveiled the jersey and football specially designed for the Kashmir Super League.

J&K gets Rs 173.44 Cr for TB elimination

Raja Syed Rather

Srinagar, Aug 08: Jammu and Kashmir has been allocated Rs 173.44 crore under the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) during the last five years, while Ladakh received Rs 21.81 crore during the same period, according to data furnished by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the Lok Sabha.

As per the reply by Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Anupriya Patel to an unstarred question, the allocations for Jammu and Kashmir stood at Rs 23 crore in 2021-22, Rs 23.64 crore in 2022-23, Rs 26 crore in 2023-24, Rs 35.33 crore in 2024-25 and Rs 65.47 crore in 2025-26.

For Ladakh, the allocation stood at Rs 3.90 crore in 2021-22, Rs 4.10 crore in 2022-23, Rs 4.51 crore in 2023-24, Rs 4.14 crore in 2024-25 and Rs 5.16 crore in 2025-26.

The data shows that the annual allocation for J&K increased by more than two-and-a-half times over the five-year period, from Rs 23 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 65.47 crore in 2025-26.

Similarly, Ladakh's annual allocation increased from Rs 3.90 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 5.16 crore in 2025-26.

The Ministry said the government has implemented the National TB

Elimination Programme under the aegis of the National Health Mission. It said India contributed 26 per cent of total TB deaths globally in 2023 as per the WHO Global TB Report 2024, while the proportion declined to 25 per cent in 2024 as per the Global TB Report 2025.

The Ministry further said that the country's estimated TB incidence declined by 21 per cent from 237 per lakh population in 2015 to 187 in 2024, while estimated TB mortality declined by 25 per cent from 28 per lakh population to 21 during the same period. Treatment coverage increased from 53 per cent in 2015 to 92 per cent in 2024.

Among measures to tackle multi-drug-resistant TB, the government has focused on early detection, free drugs and diagnostics, universal drug susceptibility testing, decentralised treatment centres and shorter all-oral treatment regimens.

The Ministry said universal drug susceptibility testing is being undertaken through 11,296 nucleic acid amplification test laboratories, while the country has established 108 Line Probe Assay laboratories, 74 Liquid Culture Testing Laboratories, 37 Intermediate Reference Laboratories and

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

Principal Secretary Culture, Div Com review I-Day celebrations preparations

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Aug 08: Principal Secretary Culture Department, Brij Mohan Sharma and Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg on Saturday jointly chaired a comprehensive meeting at the Tourist Reception Centre (TRC) to review and finalize arrangements for the mega Tiranga Rally scheduled to be held from SKICC to the Botanical Garden on August 12 and the Independence Day celebration at Bakshi Stadium.

During the meeting, the Principal Secretary directed the concerned departments to put in place innovative and theme-based arrangements to enhance public participation and patriotic fervour during the Tiranga Rally.

Brij Mohan Sharma called for installation of theme-based stalls and exhibition at SKICC. He directed the concerned departments to ensure attractive displays and effective public engagement. Brij Mohan Sharma also reviewed arrangements for cultural programmes, band performances and the felicitation of VVIPs, war widows and war heroes.

On the occasion, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg directed all concerned departments and stakeholders to ensure overwhelming participation in the Tiranga Rally. He called upon officers to ensure that



route. He further directed to sensitize participants about adherence to the National Flag Code and called for organizing a Shikara Tiranga Rally in Dal Lake as part of the celebrations.

Principal Secretary also reviewed plan for setting up theme-based stalls and exhibition at SKICC. He directed the concerned departments to ensure attractive displays and effective public engagement.

Brij Mohan Sharma also reviewed arrangements for cultural programmes, band performances and the felicitation of VVIPs, war widows and war heroes.

On the occasion, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg directed all concerned departments and stakeholders to ensure overwhelming participation in the Tiranga Rally. He called upon officers to ensure that

participants reach SKICC well in advance to facilitate the smooth conduct of the event.

He reviewed the transport plan for participants and directed the concerned agencies to ensure effective mobilization as per the prescribed targets. He also stressed the need for foolproof security arrangements at all venues and along the designated rally route.

Anshul Garg also directed for constitution of a committee comprising officers of SMC, Police and Sanik Welfare Department to monitor the strict compliance for respect of flag code during the event.

Besides, Div Com directed for enmass participation in Har Ghar Tiranga and celebration of National Song.

The Divisional Commissioner further reviewed arrangements for drinking

water and uninterrupted power supply at the venue and issued necessary directions to the concerned departments. He also directed the establishment of First Aid Camps and deployment of ambulances at strategic locations to meet any medical emergency.

Anshul Garg also reviewed preparations for the Independence Day celebrations at Bakshi Stadium and directed officers to ensure seamless, coordinated and foolproof arrangements for a vibrant celebration of the national event.

He issued detailed directions regarding the showering of flower petals by the Air Force, illumination of government buildings, constitution of parade and band contingents, issuance of security passes, appointment of nodal officers, organization of cultural programmes and nomination of commentators.

He also reviewed seating arrangements, security arrangements and other logistical requirements at the main venue.

Emphasizing the importance of basic amenities, the Divisional Commissioner directed the concerned departments to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply, installation of adequate water dispensers

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Ladakh's tourism sector witnessing strong upward trajectory

- 3,30,332 visit UT from Jan-Jul
- Public heeds PM Modi's domestic tourism call: LG Saxena



Raja Syed Rather

Leh, Aug 08: Ladakh's tourism sector continues to witness a strong upward trajectory, with tourist arrivals crossing the one-lakh mark for two successive months in June and July 2026.

According to the data, the Union Territory has recorded 3,30,332 tourist arrivals from January to July this year, already reaching 98.35 per cent of the total 3,35,872 tourists recorded in 2025.

The surge has been particularly noticeable in the months of June and July, when more than 2.12 lakh tourists visited Ladakh, accounting for nearly 65 per cent of the total 3.30 lakh tourist arrivals recorded so far this year.

Ladakh received 1,05,046 tourists in July 2026, compared to 67,273 in July 2025, registering a growth of 56.15 per cent. The July arrivals comprised 95,416 domestic and 9,630 foreign tourists.

June also witnessed a significant increase, with 1,07,740 tourists visiting Ladakh compared to 75,089 in June 2025, representing a growth of 43.48 per cent. Of the June 2026 arrivals, 1,01,060 were domestic and 6,680 foreign tourists. The trend reflects the growing popularity of Ladakh as a destination for adventure, nature, culture, spirituality and high-altitude tourism.

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena attributed the growing tourist footfall, particularly domestic tourism, to the sustained infrastructure development in Ladakh as well as the appeal of Prime Minister Narendra Modi

to citizens to visit tourist places in India and promote domestic tourism.

"The fact that Ladakh has crossed the one-lakh mark in tourist arrivals for two successive months and has already achieved more than 98 per cent of the entire 2025 footfall by the end of July is a very encouraging milestone. PM Modi's appeal to our citizens to explore the beauty and diversity of our own country has given a further impetus to domestic tourism. Ladakh and India are among the safest places for tourists, and we welcome visitors from across India and abroad. Our priority is to ensure that this growth translates into sustainable livelihood opportunities for our people while protecting Ladakh's fragile ecology, rich culture and heritage," said LG Saxena.

SURGE IN TOURIST ARRIVALS SUPPORTED BY VIBRANT CALENDAR OF CULTURAL, SPIRITUAL EVENTS

The surge in tourist arrivals during June and July has also been supported by a vibrant calendar of cultural, spiritual and experiential events organised across Ladakh. Major attractions during the period included the Hemis Festival, Pratham Sindhu Kumbh, Ladakh Astro Week 2026 (held in the last week of May), Phyang Tsedup and several other local monastic festivals, which brought together visitors interested in Ladakh's rich Buddhist heritage, culture, spirituality and unique high-altitude experiences.

The composition of tourist arrivals till July also

Continued on
www.kashmirthunder.in

J&K wins 'Best Adventure Tourism Destination' award

KT News Desk

Ahmedabad, Aug 08: The Jammu and Kashmir Tourism concluded its vibrant three day participation at the Travel and Tourism Fair (TTF) Ahmedabad, emerging as one of the major attractions for travel trade, tourism stakeholders and the visitors at the prestigious event.

The participation of Jammu and Kashmir received a significant recognition with J&K being honoured with the best adventure tourism destination award, reaffirming its growing position as one of India's most diverse and exciting adventure tourism destinations.

During the three-day event, J&K Tourism showcased the region not merely as a destination of breathtaking landscapes, snow-capped mountains and pristine lakes



but as a place where the visitors can experience its culture, traditions, hospitality, cuisine and way of life.

The J&K Tourism delegation extended an open invitation to the travellers from Gujarat and across India to move beyond conventional sightseeing and come to J&K to live the life of the Himalayas.

"Come to Jammu and Kashmir not only to see its scenic beauty but to experience it, live its culture, connect with its people and discover the adventure that lies in every corner of the Himalayas," was the message conveyed by J&K Tourism at the fair.

From trekking, rafting, skiing, mountaineering and paragliding to homestays, village tourism, heritage experiences and immersive cultural journeys, J&K offers a wide spectrum of experiences for the new-age

traveller, particularly the younger generation seeking authentic, experiential and adventure-led holidays.

The participation also highlighted the potential of homestays and community-based tourism in creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities while enabling tourists to experience the authentic warmth and culture of Jammu & Kashmir.

The TTF Ahmedabad platform provided J&K Tourism an opportunity to engage with the vibrant Gujarat travel market and strengthen partnerships with travel trade, tour operators and tourism stakeholders. The event brought together tourism boards, travel companies, hospitality brands and other stakeholders from India and abroad, providing an important platform for destination promotion and business networking.

The Digital Transformation Of The Indian Judiciary: E-Courts Mission Mode Project

The e-Courts Mission has transformed a traditionally paper-heavy, process-driven and opaque judiciary into a more accessible, transparent, and technology-enabled online system

Press Information Bureau

The e-Courts Mission Mode Project has transformed India's paper-based judiciary into a digitally enabled and trackable justice delivery system. Since 2014, both case filings and disposals have nearly tripled, with courts consistently disposing of more cases than are filed each year. Over 753 crore pages of court records have been digitised, while thousands of e-Sewa Kendras are helping bridge the digital divide by expanding access to judicial services. Together, these reforms are making the justice system faster, more transparent, and more accessible to everyone.

Digitising India's Judiciary

India's judiciary, which serves over a billion people, has long relied on paper records and brick-and-mortar infrastructure. Many citizens incurred excessive travel and other expenses visiting courts and other establishments for their matters and documents. This archaic system made the delivery of justice slow, cumbersome and expensive for the people it served.

The Government launched the e-Courts Mission Mode Project in 2007 to address these challenges. This Mission aims to systematically speed up proceedings by digitising various court proceedings and documents. It is also making the judicial process more affordable, accessible and transparent for all involved, including lawyers, judges and clerks. Now in its third phase, the Mission has transformed the judicial system using technology.

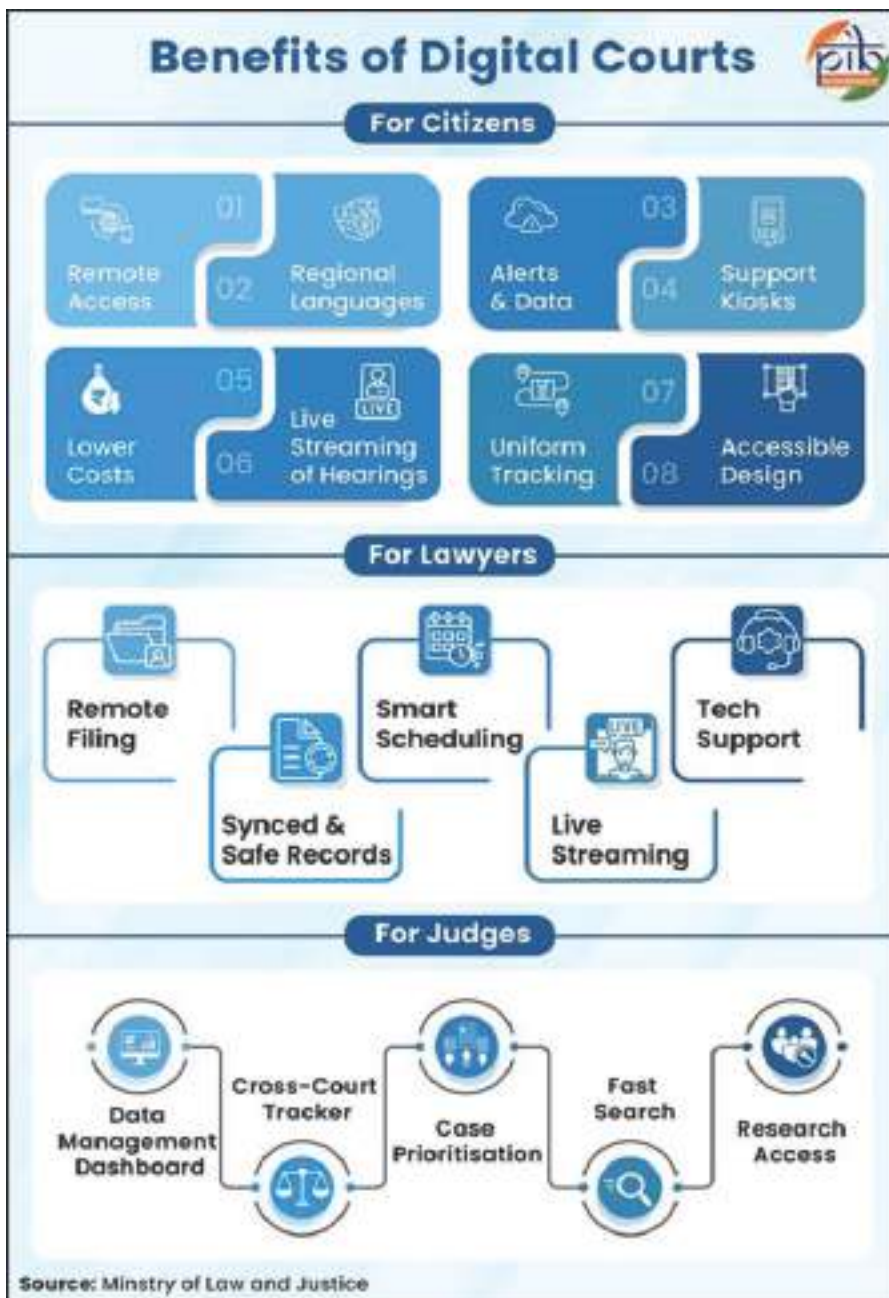
Phase I (2011–2015) laid the foundation of this Mission by computerising over 14,000 courts and building basic network infrastructure needed to support technology-enabled judicial services.

Phase II (2015–2023) built on this with a range of citizen-centric services, introducing the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), eFiling, and eSewaKendras (a physical help desk providing digital court services). The phase also expanded video conferencing infrastructure more than fivefold, significantly enhancing virtual access to judicial proceedings.

The project is now in its third phase (2023–2027). This phase envisions a transition towards digital, paperless and more intelligent courts through large-scale digitisation of records, wider use of virtual hearings, deeper interoperability across justice institutions and adoption of emerging technologies including Artificial Intelligence (AI), analytics and Optical Character Recognition (OCR).

Key Achievements of Phase III

The third phase of the e-Courts Mission has recorded significant achievements across multiple components. Fully functional e-Sewa Kendras have been established at 1,806 locations across court complexes. The infrastructure for paperless courts has been set up in 474 courts, while the expansion of virtual courts for hearing cases through robust digital infrastructure has been achieved in 538 courts. Implementation of e-filing of court cases is now available in 4,519 courts. Video conferencing facilities have been enhanced and upgraded, with 7,553 establishments—including courts, jails and hospitals—now equipped with VC facilities. Solar facilities for ensuring seamless availability of ICT infrastructure have been provided to 1,626 court complexes. The National Service & Tracking of Electronic Processes (NSTEP) facility is now available in 6,895 courts. Migration of all High Court and District Court websites to the S3WAAS platform has been completed for 734 court sites.



Additional hardware has been provided to 18,380 courts and judicial officers under Phase II. Integration with the Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) to enable seamless transfer of data and information among different pillars like courts, police, jails and forensic labs has been implemented in all High Courts. A total of 2,372 training sessions have been held for all stakeholders. Under knowledge management, the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras is developing a Learning Management System (LMS). Connectivity has been established at 174 sites using Software Defined Wide Area Network (SDWAN) technology.

Benefits of Court Digitisation

Virtual courts, video conferencing facility, case trackers and dashboards showing pending and disposed cases, among other digital tools, have organised and sped up court proceedings. These reforms benefit all stakeholders involved.

Transparency in pending and disposed cases through National Data Judicial Grid: The National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), launched under Phase II, is an online public dashboard that tracks court orders, judgments and case details in real time, including pending cases across all levels of the judiciary. The NJDG comprises three dedicated dashboards for the Supreme Court, High Courts and District Courts. Together, they provide insightful details on the functioning of courts across the country by tracking the number of pending and disposed cases

in High Courts and Subordinate Courts, the distribution of cases by category and stage of proceedings, and the reasons for case delays along with the duration of such delays. The NJDG aims to improve transparency and accountability in the system by making data on pending court cases public. It has also helped in judicial planning, monitoring and remote administration by the High Court judges, District Judges and High Court Registry.

Speeding up of processes through e-Filing of documents: Previously, citizens and lawyers had to file court documents in person. The e-Filing system now removes this need, allowing documents to be filed online from anywhere. It supports English as well as regional languages, and works across District Courts, High Courts and the Supreme Court.



The system provides for online payments, online submission of Vakalatnamas, e-signing of documents, online video recording of oaths, application filings, portfolio management for advocates and litigants, adding colleagues and juniors as partners to manage cases collaboratively, dashboards tracking the status of all completed or pending cases, and readymade templates for various commonly filed pleadings. Since inception till June 30, 2026, more than 1.25 crore cases have been filed through the e-filing platform, and the e-payments system has processed transactions worth Rs. 1,404 crore in court fees and Rs. 75 crore in fines.

Digitising legacy court records for efficient case retrieval and storage: Crores of older court records are being digitised under Phase III of the mission. This helps

preserve valuable records from physical damage and makes retrieval and research faster and more efficient.

Affordable access to court proceedings through remote hearings: Litigants, lawyers, witnesses, and other stakeholders can now participate in hearings remotely through video conferencing. This has eliminated the need for travel, enabling easier access to courts across cities and states and improving access to justice. Video conferencing facilities have been expanded across 7,553 establishments including courts, jails and hospitals. Courts across the nation have conducted over 4.18 crore remote hearings through this method. Livestreaming of court proceedings is operational in 11 High Courts. Thirty-one Virtual Courts have been established to enable online adjudication of traffic challans, which have received 11.33 crore challans amounting to Rs. 1,135.79 crores. Nyaya Shruti, launched in 2024 under the Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS), enables accused persons, witnesses, police officials, prosecutors, scientific experts, and prisoners to appear and testify virtually via video conferencing, saving time and resources while speeding up case resolution.

Connecting Police, Courts, Prisons and Forensics

Digitisation now links the entire criminal justice chain, not just the courts. ICJS (Interoperable Criminal Justice System) is a platform letting police, courts, prisons, forensics and prosecution exchange FIRs, charge-sheets, orders and reports electronically. CCTNS (Crime & Criminal Tracking Network and System) computerises police processes from FIR to charge-sheet, with Nyaya Sanhita-linked deadline alerts for investigating officers. ITSSO (Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences) is a dashboard tracking investigations in women and child sexual-offence cases against charge-sheet deadlines. e-Sakshya is a secure app for capturing and managing digital evidence, preserving its integrity from collection to court. e-Summons enables electronic generation, transmission and execution of court summons. MedLeaPR (Medico Legal Examination and Postmortem Reporting) is a hospitals' online system for medico-legal exams and postmortem reports. Nyaya Shruti is a video-conferencing platform for virtual testimony by the accused, witnesses, police, prosecutors and forensic experts. e-Forensic enables end-to-end digital case handling across forensic labs. e-Prison is a cloud-based national network for prison and prisoner management. e-Prosecution is a digital workflow linking police and prosecution for timely legal opinions. NAHS (National Automated Fingerprint Identification System) is a centralised biometric database for real-time fingerprint matching against criminal records.

Enabling Seamless Tracking of Judicial Business Through Digital Platforms

Lawyers, litigants, judges and others can now track case status and updates through digital platforms such as apps, the multilingual e-Courts Services Portal, email and SMS. These services have enhanced tracking and transparency, reducing the need for physical visits to courts and easing judicial service delivery. Over 4 lakh SMSs and 6 lakh emails are sent daily. The multilingual e-Courts services portal records about 35 lakh hits daily. The e-Courts Services mobile app, with 3.84 crore downloads, provides lawyers and litigants relevant information about case status and cause lists. The JustIS app, with 22,594 downloads, is a management tool for the judges, assisting

them to effectively organise and monitor their judicial business. Under the National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes (NSTEP), bailiffs use a centralised, GPS-enabled web and mobile app to serve summons and notices electronically and in real time. NSTEP replaces the erstwhile slow, paper-based process with a transparent, trackable digital system, enabling faster service across districts and states.

Improved Understanding of Legal Process Through e-SEWA Kendras

E-Sewa Kendras established within court complexes serve as citizen-friendly assistance centres where people can get guidance on various legal procedures and processes. These kiosks provide facilities including answering queries on case status and next hearing dates, processing online applications for certified copies, handling e-filing of petitions, assisting with online purchase of e-stamp papers and e-payments, helping litigants apply for and obtain Aadhaar-based digital signatures, promoting and assisting with downloading the eCourts mobile app, booking eMulakat appointments for jail visits, answering queries on judges' leave schedules, guiding litigants to free legal aid, facilitating traffic challan disposal through virtual courts, explaining how to set up and join a video-conference hearing, and sharing judgment and order copies via email, WhatsApp or other digital channels. There are 49 e-Sewa Kendras functional across all High Courts and 2,535 e-Sewa Kendras across District Courts as on June 30, 2026.

Advancing Digital Justice Through Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

AI and Machine Learning in High Courts through 2027 is the next step under Phase III of the Mission. Rs. 53.57 crore of the total Rs. 7,210 crore outlay has been earmarked for this development. Legal research, case management, transcriptions, translations, and judicial decision-making support get enhanced with the integration of these technologies.

Key initiatives which are under pilot testing include AI and ML tools transcribing oral arguments in Constitutional Bench matters, with transcripts published on the Supreme Court's website. LegRAA (Legal Research and Analysis Assistant) helps judges with legal research and document analysis. Digital Courts 2.1 lets judges and judicial officers manage cases in a paperless format, giving them a single window for all case-related information and tasks. It includes voice-to-text (ASR-SHRUTI) and translation (PANINI) tools to assist with order and judgment dictation. Judgments are being translated into 18 Indian languages through the eSCR portal, with the National Informatics Centre having translated over 83,000 so far, including 36,344 into Hindi as of March 2025. An AI tool built with IIT Madras automatically flags defects in e-filed petitions and extracts case data and meta-data; prototype access has been granted to 200 Advocates-on-Record, with integration into the e-filing system and the Court's case management software (ICMIS) underway.

An Overhauled Judicial System

The e-Courts Mission has modernised and digitised India's judicial system. It has replaced tedious processes—in-person court visits and physical paperwork—with something far easier, more trackable and more efficient. New AI tools are helping various stakeholders work more effectively. Through these interventions, anyone can access judicial services from anywhere. Justice delivery is now more transparent, faster and more affordable for the public.

A More Accessible, Transparent and Efficient Judiciary

The e-Courts Mission has transformed a traditionally paper-heavy, process-driven and opaque judiciary into a more accessible, transparent, and technology-enabled online system. The National Judicial Data Grid has made pending cases visible for the first time. Over 753 crore pages of old court records have been digitised and made searchable.

With these new tools and technology, the judiciary can handle increased case-loads in an efficient manner. As Phase III progresses through 2027, it is further advancing the vision of a justice system that works for all, regardless of their location or circumstances.

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

Strengthening Academic Profile

Sakeena Itoo, Nasir Aslam Wani review progress on development activities of KU's campus at Wayan Kupwara

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 08: Minister for Education, Health & Medical Education and Social Welfare, Sakeena Itoo, along with Advisor to the Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani, Saturday reviewed the progress on strengthening the academic profile and development activities of Kashmir University's campus at Wayan Kupwara.

The meeting was attended by Vice Chancellor, Kashmir University, Prof. Nilofer Khan; Commissioner Secretary, Higher Education, Ram Niwas Sharma; Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Balasahab Suse; Registrar Kashmir University, senior officers of education department and other concerned officers of district administration Kupwara, either in person or through video conferencing.

During the meeting, the Minister and the Advisor took a detailed review of the ongoing works, academic infrastructure, institutional requirements and other issues related for the



development of the campus.

The meeting also discussed measures for strengthening the campus as a prominent centre of higher education in the north Kashmir region, with emphasis on providing quality and accessible academic opportunities to students of Kupwara and adjoining areas.

The Minister stressed on the need for expediting all pending works and ensuring coordinated efforts among the concerned departments and university

authorities for timely completion of the required infrastructure. She underscored that the campus should be equipped with adequate academic, administrative and student-support facilities to cater effectively to the growing educational needs of the region.

The Minister also directed the stakeholder departments to remove all kind of bottlenecks regarding further development and expansion of the campus. She also directed the VC

Kashmir to conduct on-field visit of the campus and take stock of ongoing development works.

The Minister also directed the Deputy Commissioner Kupwara to sort out the issue of land allotment in synergy with DFO Kupwara.

Speaking in the meeting, Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani highlighted the importance of the Kupwara campus in expanding access to higher and professional education for students in the district. He called for close coordination between all stakeholders and timely resolution of issues affecting the campus's development.

He also emphasised on strengthening the academic profile of the campus by introducing relevant, employment-oriented and professional courses in accordance with local requirements and emerging opportunities.

During the meeting, VC Kashmir University, Prof. Nilofer Khan gave a detailed presentation on the progress on strengthening the academic activities of campus at Wayan Kupwara.

Acting Chief Justice chairs awareness programme on NALSA's SAMVAD Scheme

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, AUGUST 8: Acting Chief Justice High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Sanjeev Kumar and Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority, in presence of M.K. Sharma, Registrar General, High Court of J&K and Ladakh Saturday presided over an awareness programme on NALSA's SAMVAD (Strengthening Access to Justice for Marginalized, Vulnerable Adivasis and De-notified/ Nomadic Tribes) Scheme at Imtiyaz Memorial Government Degree College, Shopian.

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

On arrival, the Acting Chief Justice and other dignitaries inspected various stalls presented by the different government departments of district Shopian.

In his presidential address, the Acting Chief Justice lauded the efforts of DLSA Shopian and J&K LSA for organizing such programmes. He highlighted the constitutional and legal rights of tribal communities and emphasized the role of Legal Services Authorities in ensuring access to justice at the grassroots level. He stressed that NALSA's SAMVAD Scheme,



2025" is aimed at bridging the gap between tribal people and legal aid services.

Delivering the welcome address, Mehmood Ahmad Chowdhary, Principal District & Sessions Judge & Chairman, DLSA Shopian highlighted the importance of spreading legal awareness and community outreach among the tribal populations.

MLA Shopian, Deputy Commissioner Shopian and SSP Shopian were also present.

Later, the dignitaries released the publication "Sabeel", prepared by District Legal Services Authority, Shopian.

A vibrant cultural programme was presented by the tribal boys and girls which showcased the rich culture and heritage of the tribal community of Shopian.

The event was attended by

more than two thousand Tribal people of every nook and corner of Shopian who were made aware about the Samvad Scheme 2025.

During the programme, felicitation certificates were distributed among the achievers of tribal community of the district. Apart from that beneficiaries of various government schemes from the tribal community were awarded the benefits on the spot by the Acting Chief Justice and other dignitaries.

The members of Bar, representatives of tribal communities and officers of various departments also spoke on the occasion and shared their views regarding implementation of tribal welfare schemes.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Principal Magistrate, JJB Shopian.

DDC Jammu reviews healthcare scenario



KT News Desk

JAMMU, AUGUST 08: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Jammu Dr Rakesh Minhas Saturday chaired a comprehensive meeting to review the status of healthcare services and infrastructure in the district.

Detailed discussions were held on maternal and infant care, including institutional deliveries through C-sections, progress under RMNCH+A and coverage under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), besides other related schemes. The DDC also reviewed the status of the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) and took stock of claim coverage and hospital-related issues under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY.

He pitched for seeking collaboration of private hospitals in TB elimination efforts. "A special campaign shall be launched to reach out to vulnerable sections, with emphasis on intensive screening and providing assured health assistance.

Reviewing the status of Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) screening in the district, the DDC instructed for ABHA ID

generation and maximum enrollment of beneficiaries. He stressed on competitive progress vis-a-vis national and UT benchmarks.

The status of development works, renovation and upgradation of health facilities under District Capex and other budgetary heads was also assessed, with officers giving a sector-wise appraisal of ongoing works.

The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner Sher Singh; Additional Deputy Commissioner Vidhu Shekhar; Chief Medical Officer Dr Narinder Bhatial and Chief Planning Officer, besides Block Medical Officers and other concerned officers.

The DDC also lauded the role of the Health Department for its contribution to the ongoing Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra.

Preparedness for the upcoming National Deworming Day campaign, commencing August 10, was also reviewed during the meeting. The week-long campaign will target children of the specified age group for administration of deworming tablets across the district.

Health Minister dedicates 50 bedded Sub-District Hospital Qaimoh to public

Lays foundation for road restoration, school building works at Chimmer

KT News Desk

KULGAM, AUGUST 8: Minister for Education, Health & Medical Education and Social Welfare, Sakeena Itoo, Saturday inaugurated new campus of 50 bedded Sub-District Hospital, Qaimoh and dedicated to the public in a ceremonial function.

MLA Devsar, Peerzada Feroze Ahmad, Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, officers and officials of Health Department and locals were present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister congratulated the people of Qaimoh and adjoining areas and reaffirmed the department's commitment to upgrade the hospital with additional staff and enhanced facilities in a phased manner.

"The government is according special focus on upgrading the healthcare services across Jammu and Kashmir. All measures are being taken to strengthen the hospitals and health centres, including recruitment of staff and upgradation of both clinical and non-clinical facilities," asserted Sakeena Itoo.

Emphasizing added accountability and responsiveness to healthcare issues, she urged the hospital administration and staff to address the genuine public demands promptly and ensure delivery of good governance at the grassroots.



MLA Devsar expressed gratitude to the government for dedicating the long-awaited hospital to the public. He termed it a major milestone for healthcare access in the area.

Constructed at an estimated cost of Rs. 1932.65 lakh by the R&B Division, Kulgam, the hospital is a modern ground-plus-3 storey building with a plinth area of 19,900 sq.ft, total carpet area of 58,000 sq.ft providing capacity of 50 beds IPD. The facility houses diverse and patient-friendly sections including spacious OPDs, IPDs, diagnostic laboratories, and dedicated areas for patients and hospital staff. The infrastructure has been designed to provide comprehensive healthcare services to the population of Qaimoh and surrounding areas.

With the operationalization of the Sub-District Hospital Qaimoh, the residents are expected to benefit from improved access to specialized treatment, emergency care, and diagnostic

services closer to home.

Later, Minister laid foundation stone for road restoration and school construction projects including permanent restoration of road from Kounserbal to Nandimarg; road from Batpora to Chimmer and school building at Chimmer in the DH sub division.

A mega public outreach camp was also held at Chimmer village where Sakeena Itoo listened to public on their development and welfare demands and suggestions for improved public service delivery. She assured action on the demands raised by the public.

While addressing the gathering, the Minister highlighted the ongoing government interventions and initiatives designed for public welfare in all sectors of governance, ranging from creating infrastructure of roads, school and higher education projects or extending better healthcare and social welfare services.

Awareness, sensitisation programme on CGHS held for J&K pensioners

KT News Desk

JAMMU, AUGUST 08: The Finance Department, Government of Jammu & Kashmir, through the Additional Treasury Gandhi Nagar, Jammu, organized an Awareness and Sensitization Programme on the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) for eligible pensioners of the J&K Government service on or after 31st October, 2019.

The programme was aimed at familiarizing pensioners with the healthcare facilities, services and benefits available under CGHS and to address their queries regarding enrollment, treatment facilities, reimbursements and other aspects of the scheme. CGHS is a Government of India healthcare scheme providing cashless treatment to eligible Central Government pensioners and their families through CGHS Wellness Centres and empanelled hospitals. The scheme covers consultation, medicines, diagnostics, hospitalization, emergency and specialized treatment, with eligible family members including spouse, dependent children, parents/parents-in-law and eligible daughters.

The event was graced by distinguished dignitaries, including Rajesh Talwar, Director General, Accountancy Training

Institute Jammu and Rajesh Kotwal, Director Accounts & Treasuries, Jammu, who emphasized the importance of ensuring accessible and quality healthcare for retired government employees.

The welcome address was delivered by Anudeep Kour, Treasury Officer Gandhi Nagar Treasury, Jammu. In her address, she highlighted that schemes such as CGHS are not merely about medicines, consultations, or reimbursements, but are fundamentally about providing peace of mind to pensioners. She underscored the need for a healthcare system that treats elderly patients with patience, dignity and care and encouraged beneficiaries to make full use of the facilities available under the scheme.

A detailed presentation on CGHS facilities and services was delivered by Amritanjay, spokesperson from the CGHS team, who explained the scheme's provisions and addressed various queries raised by the participants.

There was active participation from pensioners. The vote of thanks was presented by the Additional Treasury Officer, Gandhi Nagar Treasury, who expressed gratitude to the dignitaries, resource persons, Gandhi Nagar Treasury team and participants for making the programme successful.

CS sets in motion Population Enumeration Phase of Census-2027 in snow-bound areas of J&K

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 8: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Saturday chaired a meeting of the Union Territory Level Census Coordination Committee (UTLCCC) to review and finalize preparations for the second phase of Census-2027, involving Population Enumeration in snow-bound and otherwise inaccessible areas of J&K.

The meeting besides Director, Census Operations, J&K and Ladakh, Amit Sharma was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Planning, Development & Monitoring Divisional Commissioner, Jammu/Kashmir; Secretary, Rural Development Department; Director, School Education, Kashmir; Senior functionaries of the Directorate of Census Operations, besides Deputy Commissioners from the concerned districts through virtual mode.

The Chief Secretary directed the concerned district administrations to ensure timely

appointment of Enumerators and Supervisors against the additional charges created for Phase-II, with preference given to personnel having the requisite technological proficiency for smooth execution of the digital enumeration process.

He called for vigorous and comprehensive training of all Enumerators and Supervisors, emphasizing that the field-level workforce must be fully conversant with the prescribed questionnaire, digital applications and protocols so that the exercise is completed efficiently and without errors or omissions.

The Chief Secretary further stressed the need for intensive publicity and public awareness campaigns in all areas being covered under the second phase, particularly in remote and snow-bound pockets, so that residents are well informed about the enumeration schedule, self-enumeration facility and their role in ensuring accurate and quality data collection.

He also called for timely disbursement of honorarium to



personnel for the work completed during the first phase and upon successful culmination of the second phase, besides putting in place an effective monitoring mechanism.

He directed the Directorate of Census Operations and the respective District Administrations to maintain close coordination and undertake regular monitoring of field progress to ensure timely completion of the exercise.

At the outset, Director, Census Operations, J&K and Ladakh, Amit Sharma,

presented a comprehensive operational blueprint for Phase-II of the Census, outlining the timelines, deployment strategy, training framework, technological arrangements and public outreach measures for ensuring accurate and inclusive population enumeration in the designated snow-bound pockets.

He made out that citizens will have the facility of self-enumeration through the official Census portal from August 17 to August 31, 2026, followed by door-to-door physical enumeration from September 1

to September 30, 2026. The Census Moment will be 00:00 hours of October 1, 2026, while a revisional round will be conducted from October 1 to October 5, 2026 for final verification and rectification of omissions, wherever required.

It was further elucidated that the exercise will cover 95 Administrative Charges and 4,146 tentative Enumeration Blocks spread across the snow-bound sectors of J&K. Major operational clusters include Doda with 15 charges, Kishtwar with 12, Baramulla

with 12, Kupwara with 10, Ramban with 8 and Anantnag with 8 charges.

The meeting was also informed that the Phase-II enumeration will be carried out through the official 'Census 2027-PE' mobile application, supported by the Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) portal for real-time monitoring of field operations and progress.

During the exercise, Enumerators will cover normal, institutional and houseless households through a comprehensive digital questionnaire designed to capture key socio-demographic, economic, migration, fertility and other relevant indicators. Special training modules have also been devised for personnel handling Special Charges, including Defence and Paramilitary establishments in these areas.

Moreover a structured training cascade has been put in place for the successful conduct of the exercise. The UT-level Officers and Principal Census Officers' Conference was held

on August 7, followed by training of District/Charge Officers and Census Clerks from August 10 to 12. District Field Trainers will undergo training from August 13 to 17, while training of Enumerators and Supervisors at the Charge level will be conducted from August 20 to 29, 2026.

The Directorate of Census Operations has also planned an extensive hyperlocal awareness campaign, including media outreach, community radio programmes, social media initiatives, transit branding and mobile announcement vehicles, besides targeted communication interventions to encourage maximum public participation in self-enumeration and field enumeration.

The Chief Secretary directed all stakeholders to work in close coordination and maintain a zero-omission approach, in these difficult and snow-bound terrains, so that every eligible household and individual is duly covered and the Census exercise culminates with accuracy, efficiency and credibility.

Ayush Ministry’s research body, BIS sign MoU to establish int’l quality standards

PTI

New Delhi, Aug 08: The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences of the Union Ayush Ministry and the Bureau of Indian Standards have signed an MoU to advance capacity building for the Ayush sector.

The MoU was signed by Vaidya Rabinarayan Acharya, Director General, CCRAS, and Sanjay Pant, Deputy Director General (Standardisation-II), BIS, in the presence of Ministry of Ayush Secretary Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha.

According to a statement by the ministry, considered a milestone in India's efforts to establish globally benchmarked quality standards for Ayurveda, the Memorandum of Understanding paves the way for safer, scientifically validated and internationally accepted Ayurvedic products, practices and research.

Representing a convergence between India's premier Ayurveda research organisation and the country's national standards body, the agreement combines scientific research with internationally accepted standardisation practices, the

statement said.

Apart from enhancing India's contribution to international standardisation initiatives, the partnership will also develop standards for Ayurveda and other Ayush systems, conformity assessment mechanisms, and promote scientific validation of traditional knowledge, it said.

On this occasion, Kotecha said, "Quality is the foundation of credibility, and credibility is the key to global acceptance."

He said the partnership will strengthen public confidence in Ayurveda, and reinforce India's leadership in evidence-based traditional medicine globally.

Rabinarayan said that CCRAS has consistently strengthened its research ecosystem by adopting internationally recognised quality systems, with several of its institutes and laboratories already accredited under the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) and ISO standards.

"This collaboration with BIS will further enhance the quality of research, standardisation of laboratory practices, and development of scientifically

validated benchmarks that will benefit researchers, industry and ultimately the people."

It is the 100th MoU of BIS and the first to be signed with an Ayush organisation, said Pant.

"The BIS has built successful partnerships with more than a hundred premier academic and research institutions across the country. We are delighted to welcome CCRAS into this network," the deputy director BIS said.

Pant said the perfise of CCRAS scientists will enrich the standards development process and accelerate the formulation of robust Indian Standards for Ayurveda.

Chairperson of BIS Ayurveda Sectional Committee, Vaidya Jayant Deopujari, observed, "Scientific standardisation is essential for enhancing confidence in Ayurveda at both national and international levels."

Sharing the progress made in standards development, Raghavendra Naik of the Ayush Department of BIS said that 128 Indian Standards are presently under the Ayurveda Sectional Committee, while 243 standards covering different Ayush domains have been developed during the last three years.

Jharkhand govt to hold fresh talks with students protesting job exam 'irregularities'

PTI

Ranchi, Aug 08: The Jharkhand government will hold a sixth round of talks with students protesting the alleged exam irregularities in the state before reaching a final decision, said a member of the panel tasked with holding dialogue with the demonstrators.

The talks will be held around 12 pm, the member said after the panel held a four-hour meeting with Chief Minister Hemant Soren, appraising him about the progress achieved during the previous five rounds of dialogue with the protesters.

"We apprised the chief minister of students' views and demands that came to the fore during the meetings with delegations of student unions today and the day before.

"It was decided in the meeting with the chief minister that a final round of talks with the protesting students will take place at 12 pm on Sunday," the panel's member and Rural Development Minister Dipika Pandey Singh told PTI.

Another member, Minister Sanjay Prasad Yadav, said the meeting at the chief minister's residence decided to hold further talks with the agitators



demanding comprehensive reform in the Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) and Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission (JSSC).

Besides Singh and Yadav, Ministers Chandra Linda and Sudivya Kumar were present in the meeting.

At the heart of the job aspirants' protest is the demand for an independent probe into the alleged irregularities, either by the CBI or a panel of retired high court judges from outside the state.

The Jharkhand government has held five rounds of talks with various agitating outfits since Friday night, but failed to break the deadlock as the protesting job aspirants decided that their stir would continue

until all their demands are met.

The government panel first met the faction of protesters led by Jharkhand Loktantrik Krantikari Morcha leader Devendra Nath Mahto, whose fast over the issue entered its seventh day.

They then held separate meetings with delegations of the Congress-backed NSUI, ACS and JCM. On Friday night, the government had held similar talks with a delegation of the JPSC-JSSC Reforms Manch.

As many as 19 people have so far been arrested in connection with alleged irregularities in the JPSC examinations, while former chairperson of the panel, L Khiantge, has been questioned four times since July 28.

Assam flood toll rises to 99,147 lakh people still affected



PTI

Guwahati, Aug 08: The flood situation in Assam remained grim, with the toll reaching 99 as one more death was reported and over 1.47 lakh people still affected on Saturday, an official bulletin said.

The Assam Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) bulletin said the latest fatality was reported from Golaghat district.

With this, the toll in this year's floods has reached 99.

The bulletin said 12 districts of Sonitpur, Nagaon, Golaghat, Sivasagar, Hojai, Darrang, Jorhat, Dhemaji, Charaideo, Karbi Anglong, Lakhimpur and Biswanath remained affected by the deluge.

The number of affected population was at 1,47,376, with Golaghat being the worst-hit as 61,735 people continued to reel under the deluge, followed by Sivasagar (43,492) and Jorhat (24,283).

On Friday, the number of affected districts was 13, and the population was over 1.55 lakh.

The administration was operating 53 relief camps, sheltering 8,568 displaced people. Another 41 relief distribution centres are also functional.

A crop area of 10,599.89 hectares remained submerged.

The ASDMA bulletin said the Dhansiri (S) was flowing above the danger level at Golaghat and Numaligarh, and Kushiara at Sribhumi. Damage to various infrastructure, including houses and roads, was reported from the affected districts.

Mumbai trader flees with diamonds of Rs 4 crore

PTI

Mumbai, Aug 08: A diamond trader in Mumbai fled allegedly after misappropriating diamonds worth around Rs 4 crore that he had taken from several traders for sale, police said.

The Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) police have registered a case of cheating and criminal misappropriation

against diamond trader Smit Alpeshbhai Shah and launched a search for him.

According to the police, Shah had allegedly taken diamonds from traders at the Bharat Diamond Bourse (BDB) on the assurance that he would sell them and make the payments later. However, he allegedly neither returned the diamonds nor cleared the dues.

The complaint was lodged by Mrugesh Hasmukh Shah, a sales manager with Stellar Gems Private Limited, a diamond trading company located at the BDB in BKC.

The complainant told police that he was acquainted with Rajendra Momaya, proprietor of Shum Diamond Company, who introduced him to Parshwapadya Diamond, a firm

owned by Smit Shah.

Stellar Gems had been carrying out diamond purchase and sale transactions with Shah's firm for the past few months, the complaint stated.

Initially, Shah allegedly made payments on time for diamonds purchased from the company, thereby gaining its confidence. Subsequently, the company supplied diamonds weighing

around 983 carats and valued at nearly Rs 4 crore to Shah's firm in several consignments for sale, police said. However, the payments were not made within the agreed period despite repeated follow-ups.

After June 2026, Shah allegedly stopped responding to calls and messages, according to the complaint.

The complainant further

alleged that Shah had set up a bogus company with the intention of cheating diamond traders and subsequently fled after obtaining diamonds worth around Rs 4 crore.

During the preliminary inquiry, police found that Shah had allegedly taken diamonds from several other traders at the BDB under similar arrangements, an official said.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Today's young India

continue to receive young leadership infused with energy and resolve for nation-building," the Lieutenant Governor said.

INDIA'S FUTURE DEPENDS ON ADDRESSING SEVEN KEY CHALLENGES

The Lieutenant Governor said that India's future depends on addressing seven key challenges: sustaining long-term economic growth; eliminating terrorism, separatism and divisive forces while strengthening national unity; promoting transparent, accountable and technology-driven governance to curb corruption; ensuring merit-based opportunities in politics; fostering national integration through shared cultural initiatives; achieving global leadership in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and semiconductors; and building a world-class education system driven by quality, research, innovation and skills. He emphasized that overcoming these challenges requires the collective commitment of all Indians, especially the youth, to secure a prosperous, united and globally competitive India.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor also reminded the youth that leadership is about responsibility, ethics, and service. He praised the Institute's motto, Lokahitam Mam Karaniyam - Welfare of the people is my duty- as a guiding principle for future leaders.

Drawing from the Vedas and Upanishads, the Lieutenant Governor emphasised collective resolve, unity, and noble intentions as the foundation of prosperity and harmony in the society. He urged young leaders to align their thoughts and actions with public welfare, echoing India's civilisational legacy as the "Mother of Democracy."

"Leadership means understanding people, creating new paths for them, and serving them with humility and honesty. Sardar Patel used to say that in difficult times, cowards find excuses, but brave people find a way. I appreciate the faculty members and mentors who, with tireless effort, dedication, and patience, have inspired new leaders to find new paths, acquainted them with the principles of governance, engaged them in serious discussion on various policies, and given them the opportunity to test ideas against the real challenges of public life," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor outlined four essential principles for democratic leadership- Honesty and transparency as the foundation of trust, Knowledge and wisdom as the compass guiding decisions, Sensitivity to maintain balance in democracy, and public service as the highest duty of leadership.

He stressed that institutions gain strength only when infused with ethical leadership, and that true success is measured not by position but by the lives transformed.

"The strength of democracy lies in Constitutional values, institutions and in those leaders who are committed to the values of honesty, humility, and public service. Remember that institutions create the structure of democracy, but it is ethical leadership that infuses them with life, purpose, and energy. Without ethical leadership, even the finest institutions weaken over time, whereas honest and accountable leadership can turn even

ordinary institutions into powerful engines of change and nation-building," the Lieutenant Governor said.

INDIA TODAY STANDS AT HISTORIC TURNING POINT

The Lieutenant Governor stated that India today stands at a historic turning point, where its demographic power and civilisational journey are entering a new phase.

"With more than 65% of India's population under 35, the youth emerged as the nation's greatest strength. It is youth's responsibility to transform this demographic dividend into a leadership dividend by building teams, empowering others, and creating roadmaps for inclusive growth," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor cited the transformation in Jammu Kashmir post-2020 as an example of leadership rooted in public service and good governance. With over 30,000 projects completed through public participation, strengthened Panchayati Raj institutions, and digital governance, he said the region exemplifies how transparency and accountability can bring historic change.

"In your professional life, make ethics your character, public service your duty, responsibility your identity, and excellence your style of work. I believe your success will not be judged by your position, but by how many lives you changed, how much trust you earned, and how positive an impact you left on society. To realise the resolve of Viksit Bharat, young leadership must bring change into the life of the last person standing in the queue of development," the Lieutenant Governor told the youth.

The Lieutenant Governor urged the young leaders to balance tradition with modernity, and progress with sensitivity, to build a prosperous, inclusive, and innovative India that can guide the world.

"Every decision you make, every word you speak, and every action you take will either strengthen our democracy or weaken it. Therefore, let us choose with care and put the national interest first. Young leadership should be driven by innovation, empowered by technology, credible through transparency, humane through sensitivity, and result-oriented through effective implementation. Such leadership will strengthen good governance, deepen public trust in democracy, and take the nation to new heights. (KNO)

President confers

the high value craft," the spokesman added.

The award, which carries a citation and cash prize of 2.5 lakh, is for a rare form of Kani weaving technique guided by coded Talim scripts to ensure absolute precision, featuring nearly 20 distinct hues to recreate an antique masterpiece.

The spokesman further stated said their exquisite craftsmanship has not only kept our centuries-old tradition alive but has also earned global admiration. "They have become role models for thousands of weavers in Kashmir and the entire craft community celebrates this joyous moment with great pride," he added.

Rain lashes Kashmir

flagged the possibility of heavy to very heavy rainfall and intense showers at a few districts during August 9-11. (KNO)

Sewage, waste

100 ml, while total coliform stood at 35,000 MPN per 100 ml.

The Lar Canal recorded the highest faecal-coliform concentration among the seven samples at 2,200 MPN per 100 ml, along with total coliform of 22,000 MPN per 100 ml.

The temple spring recorded faecal coliform of 1,100 MPN per 100 ml and total coliform of 1,700 MPN per 100 ml, while the second spring recorded faecal coliform of 400 MPN per 100 ml and total coliform of 17,000 MPN per 100 ml.

At the lake's municipal water-extraction point, faecal coliform was recorded at 45 MPN per 100 ml and total coliform at 330 MPN per 100 ml.

The CPCB said the presence of faecal and total coliform indicated microbiological contamination of the water.

The inspection also painted a grim picture of waste management around the wetland, with plastic bags, bottles and other municipal waste found dumped along portions of the lake shore.

Open garbage dumping was observed near residential areas, while grey water from households was found flowing towards the lake. Solid waste was also noticed around the Kondabal area.

The CPCB further observed that a portion of the Lar Canal directly enters Manasbal Lake, raising concerns over the movement of wastewater and solid waste into the wetland.

The pollution concerns are particularly significant as Manasbal is not only an ecologically important water body but also a popular tourist destination known for its clear waters, lotus blooms and surrounding landscape.

The wetland also serves as a source of drinking water for residents of Safapora, Sumbal, Sonawari and adjoining areas of Ganderbal and Bandipora districts.

The case before the NGT alleges that untreated sewage from 14 villages is being discharged into the Manasbal Wetland through the Lar Canal.

Bhat, represented by advocates Rahul Chowdhary and Shreepuna Dasgupta, had submitted before the Tribunal that the continuous inflow of untreated wastewater was degrading the lake's ecology.

On January 30, the NGT Principal Bench directed the CPCB to conduct an assessment and submit its findings.

The CPCB also carried out physico-chemical and heavy-metal analysis of the samples. While most heavy metals, including arsenic, cadmium, chromium, cobalt, copper, lead, nickel and selenium, were below detectable limits, manganese was detected in six samples and zinc in some samples.

Iron was recorded at 1.37 mg per litre in the Lar Canal sample.

The report noted that the pollution was primarily evident through biological contamination and wastewater discharge rather than widespread heavy-metal contamination.

The authorities, meanwhile, have reported

several measures aimed at improving the condition of the lake.

The WMMDA informed the CPCB that dredging had been undertaken after a gap of more than 12 years, covering around 70,000 square feet.

Selective manual de-weeding was also carried out, with around 1.60 lakh square metres of the lake surface cleared by March 17, 2026. About 7,202.50 cubic metres of weeds were removed during the exercise, involving an expenditure of around Rs 22 lakh in 2025-26.

A sanitation contract covering collection and disposal of solid waste around the lake has also been awarded for an area of approximately 6.44 lakh square metres.

The WMMDA said a Detailed Project Report for a sewage treatment plant (STP) had been prepared by the Urban Environmental Engineering Department in consultation with the J&K Economic Reconstruction Agency.

However, the proposed STP remains a key concern for environmentalists, who say the absence of effective sewage treatment is allowing wastewater to continue reaching the wetland.

The WMMDA said communications had been sent to the Irrigation and Flood Control Department seeking measures, including mesh fencing at canal nodes, to prevent solid waste from entering the lake through the Lar Canal.

The authority has also taken up the relocation of Kondabal village with the concerned departments and said land had been identified for an Integrated Solid Waste Management Plant.

Bhat said residents of Safapora and adjoining areas had been repeatedly raising concerns over pollution in the lake.

"Locals of Safapora and adjoining areas, led by Civil Society Safapora and Social Concern Group, have been highlighting this issue for a long time, but authorities never took them seriously," he said.

He alleged that despite repeated assurances that an STP would be established to protect the lake, the project had not materialised.

"This is criminal negligence on the part of authorities and this will be placed on record before the NGT," Bhat said.

He said the matter would be taken up before the Tribunal and expressed hope that environmental compensation would be imposed on authorities responsible for the degradation of the water body.

The CPCB submitted its final report before the NGT on August 3, 2026.

The findings have brought renewed attention to the growing pressure on Manasbal Lake, where sewage inflow, household wastewater, garbage dumping and weed growth are increasingly emerging as threats to its ecological health.

For a lake celebrated for its lotus-covered waters and scenic surroundings, the contamination findings offer a stark reminder that its picturesque surface masks a deeper environmental problem that authorities now face pressure to address. (KNO)

Inclement weather:

Jammu on Saturday as a precautionary measure amid rains and inclement weather conditions prevailing in Ramban district and parts of

Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the 28th batch comprising 1,202 pilgrims who had completed darshan at the Holy Cave and were staying at the Baltal base camp was allowed to proceed towards Jammu in a down convoy of 44 vehicles, according to the Joint Police Control Room, Baltal.

The returning pilgrims included 867 males, 251 females, one child, 79 sadhus and four sadhvis. The convoy comprised 28 heavy motor vehicles (HMTVs), one medium motor vehicle (MMV), 11 light motor vehicles (LMVs) and four trucks.

Officials said 3,336 pilgrims performed darshan at the Holy Cave on Saturday. The pilgrims included 2,384 males, 569 females, 21 children, 20 sadhus, six sadhvis, four transgender pilgrims and 332 security personnel.

With this, the total number of pilgrims who have performed darshan during the 2026 Yatra has reached 4,80,019.

The 57-day-long Amarnath Yatra commenced on July 3 this year and is scheduled to culminate with the traditional Chadi Mubarak ceremony on August 28.

The pilgrimage commenced simultaneously from both the traditional Chandanwari route in Anantnag district and the Baltal route in Ganderbal district. "However, due to the recent rains, a necessity for the repair and maintenance of the Yatra tracks at vulnerable stretches has been felt, which is being undertaken by Border Roads Organisation (BRO)," an official spokesperson said.

He said IMD has predicted adverse weather conditions over the next few days. "Hence, the Yatra shall remain suspended from both routes with effect from August 9, 2026, Chadi Mubarak shall proceed via the traditional Pahalgam route and shall mark the culmination of Yatra 2026 on August 28," the spokesperson said.

The suspension comes after a particularly busy pilgrimage season, with more than 4.8 lakh devotees having visited the Holy Cave so far.

Authorities have appealed to pilgrims to follow advisories issued by the competent authorities from time to time in the interest of their safety and the smooth conduct of the pilgrimage. (KNO)

J&K food safety

in States and UTs are taken up regularly with the Commissioners of Food Safety through meetings of the Central Advisory Committee.

The Ministry also said the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has notified 259 NABL-accredited food testing laboratories and 24 referral food laboratories across the country. Food analysts are required to submit analysis reports within 14 days of receipt of samples.

The government said FSSAI is mandated to lay down science-based standards for food and regulate its manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure the availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.

The data was furnished in response to a Lok Sabha question regarding food adulteration, contamination, counterfeiting, violations of food safety standards, testing infrastructure and vacancies of Food Safety Officers. (KNO)

No charges for UPI users, vast majority of transactions to remain free for merchants as well: Govt

PTI

New Delhi, Aug 08: The government on Saturday categorically stated that consumers and small merchants will continue to enjoy free Unified Payments Interface (UPI) services to allay fears regarding the levy of charges on such transactions following the passage of a Bill to amend the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.

However, nominal Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) for merchants will be applicable as and when charges are introduced.

"They will apply only to a limited set of merchant transactions, above a certain threshold, at a nominal rate, far lower than debit or credit card MDRs," the finance ministry said in a statement.

The statement comes two days after the Lok Sabha passed a Bill to amend the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, which authorises the government to permit banks and other service providers to levy charges on payments through UPI and other notified electronic payment modes.

"Once the Parliament passes the Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which proposes to amend Section 10A of the Payment

and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, the 'UPI and Services Steering Committee' headed by NPCI will decide on the MDR, if any," it said.

The recent amendment to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act (PSS Act) has generated a debate, with some misinterpreting it as a move to impose charges on ordinary users, it said, adding, in reality, the amendment is an enabling provision designed to ensure

UPI's long-term sustainability, technological advancement, and resilience against emerging risks.

Explaining the rationale, the statement said, with exponential transaction volumes, the system requires significant and continuous upgrades in cybersecurity, fraud prevention, and infrastructure. The statement further said that it was required for market expansion and self-sustainability.



It is necessary to increase competition by encouraging more companies to expand their operations, which requires a self-sustaining revenue model, it said. Reliance on subsidies alone is not viable for the next wave of growth, it said, adding that a balanced framework is required to ensure that UPI remains robust, inclusive, and future-ready.

Addressing concerns on narratives like external influences may be driving policy changes, the statement said, this is unfounded, completely false and misleading.

If external pressure had been a factor, the government would not have introduced UPI in 2016 or made it free of charge for both merchants as well as citizens since January 2020 and ensured that it became the world's largest real time interoperable payment system, it said.

The amendment should therefore be viewed in the context of the Government's broader objective of ensuring that India's digital payment infrastructure remains sustainable, competitive, innovative and capable of serving the country's rapidly expanding digital economy, it said.

PM Museum hosts special exhibition on Vande Mataram ahead of 80th I Day



PTI

New Delhi, Aug 8: Ahead of the 80th Independence Day, the Pradhanmantri Sanghralaya is hosting an exhibition featuring a range of objects, including commemorative postage stamps on Vande Mataram and a special first day cover on its composer issued in 1976, and a sandalwood inlay wooden sculpture depicting Bharat Mata.

The five-day exhibition which began on Saturday also has on display an old tricolour bearing 'Vande Mataram' in Devanagari in the middle, officials said.

The event is being hosted in the new wing of the Prime Ministers' Museum in the Teen Murti Bhawan complex as part of the celebrations ahead of the 80th Independence Day on August 15.

The exhibition, being held as part of a special commemorative programme - 'Vande Mataram: A Timeless Tribute to the Motherland' - from August 8-12 also celebrates 150 years of Vande Mataram, and its contribution to India's freedom struggle, the officials said.

Other objects on display include a set of decorative buttons bearing Vande Mataram in Devanagari, with an old tricolour in the background.

Commemorative postage stamps on Vande Mataram and a special first day cover on its composer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, issued in 1976, along with a commemorative

stamp issued in November 2025 by India Posts are also part of the exhibition.

Besides, copies of 'Anandmath' in which Vande Mataram was first published fully in Bangla in 1882, and a copy of its English translation by Aurobindo Ghose in 1909 are also on display.

Some of the exhibits also draw from the collection of the Toshakhana of the Prime Minister's Museum and Library (PMML), a senior official said.

Written in 1875 by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Vande Mataram had turned into a rallying cry during the freedom movement.

It was adopted as India's national song by the Constituent Assembly in 1950.

The government last November launched a year-long celebration to mark 150 years of Vande Mataram.

Vande Mataram was initially composed independently and later included in Chatterjee's novel 'Anandamath'. It was first sung by Rabindranath Tagore at the 1896 Congress Session in Calcutta (now Kolkata).

The chant Vande Mataram as a political slogan was first used on August 7, 1905, according to a note, '150 Years of Vande Mataram: A Melody That Became a Movement', shared by the government on November 6 last year.

Vande Mataram was first published in the literary journal 'Bangadarshan' on November 7, 1875. Later, Chatterjee incorporated it in his novel 'Anandamath', which was published in 1882. It was set to music by Tagore.

Bill to set up body to appoint chiefs, members of tribunals to be tabled in LS next week

PTI

New Delhi, Aug 8: A Bill to set up a commission to select chairpersons and members for various tribunals following a Supreme Court direction is set to be introduced in the Lok Sabha next week. According to the Tribunals Reforms Bill, its key aim is to improve efficiency, ensure independence, transparency and uniformity in the qualification and appointment of chairpersons and members for various tribunals.

The Bill, slated for introduction in the Lok Sabha next week, also lays the framework to set up a National Tribunals Commission.

To be headquartered in the national capital, the proposed commission will consist of a

chairperson and four members, of whom two will be judicial members and two technical members. A retired Supreme Court judge or a retired chief justice of a high court will be qualified to head the proposed panel.

The Bill, which has been circulated to the Lok Sabha members, notes that the Supreme Court recently struck down certain provisions of the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021, on the grounds that they are contrary to the principles of separation of powers and judicial independence and not in consonance with the earlier judicial pronouncements that have clarified the standards governing the appointment, tenure and functioning of chairpersons and members of tribunals.

Dialogue, dignity, inclusion essential for effective access to justice: CJI Surya Kant

PTI

Indore, Aug 8: Dialogue, dignity and inclusion are essential for effective access to justice, and a true legal aid means "people spoken to and not merely spoken at", Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said on Saturday.

Speaking to reporters after a programme here, he also stated that the backlog of cases in the country has decreased significantly over the last decade.

Addressing the Western Zone Regional Conference of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), he said that the objective of legal aid is not merely



to dispose of cases, but also to ensure respectful treatment of individuals.

Access to justice begins with dialogue, the CJI said, stressing that appropriate legal solutions should be provided to people based on their specific problems.

The grievances of different communities should be heard in their own languages, he said.

Describing the volunteers associated with legal services authorities as part of a "judicial army," the CJI said they

play a crucial role in taking government schemes to the grassroots level.

He urged the volunteers to assist victims in securing justice in a manner that upholds dignity and inclusivity.

"Dialogue, dignity and inclusion -- I do not read these words as slogans for a banner. I read them as an accurate description of what legal aid looks like when it actually works: people spoken to and not merely spoken at, treated as citizens and not mere case numbers, and reached wherever they are, rather than expected to find their own way to us," the CJI said.

Families, forums seek repatriation of Indian fishermen languishing in Pak jails; write to govts

PTI

Ahmedabad, Aug 8: Ahead of the Independence Day, the family members of Gujarat-based fishermen languishing in Pakistani jails have appealed to the governments for the immediate release and repatriation of those who have completed their sentences.

Organisations National Fishworkers Forum (NFF), Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPPFD) and the fishermen's families have made this appeal in the letters written to the prime ministers of both India and Pakistan. At present, 198 Indian fishermen are imprisoned in Pakistan after allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) while fishing.

"In view of the approaching Independence Days of the respective countries, the organisations and families urge both the governments to release and repatriate these fisherpeople as a goodwill and humanitarian gesture," peace activist Jatin Desai said at a press conference here.

To make India Vishwaguru, marginalised communities must be brought into mainstream: Bhagwat

PTI

Buldhana (Maharashtra), Aug 8: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Saturday said that to make the country 'Vishwaguru' in the true sense, it is necessary to bring marginalised communities into the mainstream. Addressing a gathering after inaugurating sports grounds at a residential school for the Pardi community at Khamgaon in Maharashtra's Buldhana district, he said the communities we now describe as 'bhatke-vimukt' (nomadic and de-notified tribes) were once dispensers of knowledge.

"Every person in the 'bhatke and vimukt' community is one of our own. Hence, it is my duty to have this perspective and do something for these people, so that their lives improve," the RSS chief said.

These communities were once repositories of knowledge, Bhagwat said. "They went out (migrated) to share their knowledge selflessly, but over time became marginalised. During the British era, because they participated in the freedom

struggle, the entire Pardi community was branded as a criminal tribe, which caused them to fall far behind in development," he said.

"If we want to make India a Vishwaguru, these marginalised elements of society must be brought into the mainstream," the Sangh chief further said. To achieve this goal, society must stand together with "everyone having equal strength," Bhagwat said. Every family and every individual should have education and basic necessities of life, and the entire society should work towards this goal without merely depending on the government, he added.

The Indian society was once fully organised, but it was enslaved by foreign invaders which led to its fragmentation, the RSS chief said.

"As a result, the number of marginalised groups in society increased. Even so, these communities never accepted subjugation, they continued to struggle for freedom," he said, adding that the Sangh has been working for years for the development of the Pardi community.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL & HOSPITAL DIVISION, SRINAGAR

(Erstwhile Mechanical Hospital & Central Heating Division Srinagar)

Contact No: 0194-2496089, Email Id: exen-mechospgr@jk.gov.in.

Sub:- 1. Comprehensive Maintenance of PSA Technology based Oxygen generation Plant installed at JLNM Rainawari Srinagar
2. Comprehensive Maintenance of PSA Technology based Oxygen generation Plant including all the electrical equipment's and other allied items at CHC Chanapora Srinagar
Ref: - This office NIT No: M&HDS/TS /2026-27/35/e-tendering, Dated: -20.07.2026.

EXTENSION 02

In view of Poor response, the critical dates of above subject work tendered vide above referred e-NIT are extended as follows: -

S.No	Description	Date and Time
1.	Last Date of Bid Submission	12.08.2026 (13:00 hrs)
2.	Date of Bid Opening	12.08.2026 (15:00 hrs)

All other Terms and Conditions of the NIT shall remain the same.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
M&HD, Srinagar

No: M&HDS/TS/ 2866-69,

Date: - 08-08-2026

DIPK-4319/26
DATED: 08-08-2026

JAMMU AND KASHMIR POLICE DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS RAJOURI

E-mail ID: dp@rajouri.jkpolice.gov.in, Phone No. 01962- 26224(Fax No.01962-264068

HUE AND CRY NOTICE

Dy. SP Hqs. Rajouri vide communication No. Hqs/F-57/2026/10578-80 dated 05.08.2026 has intimated that the alleged accused person namely Sahil Sharma S/O Som Raj R/O Dassal tehsil & District Rajouri is involved in case FIR No. 314/2026 U/S 109/126(2)/191 (2) BNS & 4/25 Arms Act of PS Rajouri, who after committing the offences deliberately evading from police arrest.

Description of the absconding accused is as under:-

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Name | : Sahil Sharma |
| 2. Parentage | : Som Raj |
| 3. Address | : Dassal, Tehsil & District Rajouri |
| 4. Age | : 30 Years. |
| 5. Height | : 5'9" |
| 6. Complexion | : Wheatish |



Therefore, it is requested that a sharp lookout may please be maintained and if any clue regard-ing the whereabouts of wanted accused person is received, the same may kindly be communicat-ed on below mentioned phone numbers/mail address: -
PCR Rajouri : 01962262515, 01962264493

SHO PS, Rajouri : 9103012703,
IC PP City Rajouri : 9541900746,
Dy. SP Hqs, Rajouri : 9541900724,
DPO Rajouri : 01962262240.
Email address : dp@rajouri.jkpolice.gov.in

The identity of the informer shall be kept secret and further, if anybody found providing shelter to the accused person or concealing his presence, will also be booked under law.

No. CB/F-55-3/LC/2026/42883/OPD
Dated: 08-08-2026

DIPK-4336/26
DATED: 08-08-2026

Sr. Superintendent of Police, Rajouri

Exodus: West Bank hardships drive out Palestinian Christians

AFP

Ramallah, Palestinian Territories, Aug 8: Palestinian Christians call themselves “living stones” and say they have lived continuously in the Holy Land for the last 2,000 years. Maybe not for much longer, believes Reverend Mitri Raheb.

“If the current conditions continue, there will not be a single Palestinian Christian left by 2050,” said Raheb, founder and president of Dar Al-Kalima University in Bethlehem, the biblical birthplace of Jesus Christ.

Faced with growing uncertainty over economic and security conditions, hundreds of Christians have left since the war in the Gaza Strip began nearly three years ago.

Since the Gaza war began, attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians in the West Bank have become an almost daily occurrence, while the Israeli military has multiplied its operations and security checkpoints.

Issa Qassis, a 31-year-old entrepreneur, is considering leaving his family and the startup he established in the West Bank city of Ramallah to immigrate to the United States.

“I started seriously thinking about it about a year ago,” Qassis told AFP, saying he feels “frustrated and hopeless” about the situation.

“Every time I move one step forward in my work, I end up



A general view of the Palestinian Christian town of Taybeh, northeast of the city of Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. (Zain Jaafar / AFP)

taking three steps back.”

Between 40,000 and 45,000 Christians are estimated to live in the West Bank today, accounting for slightly more than one percent of the population.

In 1967, when Israel began occupying the territory, Christians made up around six percent.

‘Warning bell’

Clergy members, officials and researchers say young Christians such as Qassis leave due to the deterioration of the humanitarian and economic situation in the West Bank, where jobs are increasingly scarce and movement restricted.

“Parents used to pressure their children to stay here. Now they encourage them to emigrate,”

Qassis said, adding that his mother, who once opposed his departure, is no longer against it.

The desire to leave the West Bank is not limited to Palestinian Christians, but there are factors making it easier for them to do so, said Palestinian foreign minister Varsen Aghabekian Shahin.

Christians can emigrate more easily than Muslims because they are more likely to have relatives abroad, giving them better opportunities to find work and integrate culturally and socially, says Aghabekian, an Armenian Christian himself.

The decline in the Christian population in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, “should ring a very serious alarm bell for

the Christian world,” she said.

She called for “very strong action to ensure Christians remain in the land where Christ was born,” adding that “the Christian world must see the reality of this occupation.”

The Christian population is significantly less in the Gaza Strip, with only around 600 left in the war-ravaged territory of over two million.

Accelerated emigration

Christian communities have emigrated from West Bank cities in successive waves since the 18th century, with large Palestinian Christian diasporas now established in the Americas, including more than 40,000 in Chile alone.

More than 200 Christian families have emigrated from the West Bank since the Gaza war began in 2023, according to Reverend Raheb.

Church leaders told AFP they are seeing increasing emigration among young members of their congregations.

Christians of the West Bank are concentrated in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem and Bethlehem, as well as Ramallah and several surrounding villages and towns.

In the town of Taybeh, east of Ramallah — the last entirely Christian town in the West Bank — churches have documented the emigration of more than 15 families since 2023.

Its population, now 1,200, stood at 3,000 in the 1980s.

The town has been repeatedly targeted by Israeli settler attacks in recent years, targeting lands, residents’ properties and even holy sites.

“The daily suffering caused by the lack of security” resulting from the attacks, combined with difficult economic conditions, are pushing residents to reconsider their futures, Father Bashar Fawadleh, parish priest of the Latin Church in Taybeh, told AFP.

Although Taybeh lies just 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) from Ramallah, it took AFP journalists about an hour to reach it because of Israeli military checkpoints.

Excluding east Jerusalem, more than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements in the West Bank, home to around three million Palestinians.

A 2020 poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research found that 35 percent of Christians in the West Bank were considering emigrating for economic reasons, educational opportunities or in search of stability and freedom.

It also noted a concern about hard-line Islamic groups in Palestinian society as well as armed groups.

The center’s director, researcher Khalil Shikaki, said that the desire to emigrate in the West Bank is twice as high among Christians as among Muslims.

Now six years after that survey, he said, “almost everything has become worse.”

Iran says Hormuz deal with Oman 'close' but will not open waterway alone



AFP

Cairo/Washington/Riyadh, Aug 8: Iran said on Saturday that a deal with Oman on control of the Strait of Hormuz was close but would not be enough to free up the waterway.

A US official, who declined to be identified, said on Friday that Washington anticipated an agreement soon between Iran and Oman, which sit on either side of the strait, so that normal oil traffic could resume.

Agreement between the two countries over control of the strategic waterway is seen as crucial to a wider agreement to end the conflict that began with US and Israeli attacks on Iran on February 28.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Iran and Oman were “very close” to agreement on a new shipping route through the Strait of Hormuz but that reopening the strait depended on other conditions, including US compensation to Iran.

The previous shipping traffic separation scheme through the strait was no longer acceptable to Tehran, he said, adding that Iran was discussing a temporary route with Oman while technical and legal issues surrounding a permanent route were resolved.

Oman’s foreign ministry said on Saturday that negotiations were proceeding “in a positive and constructive atmosphere”, and urged against any actions that might jeopardise the progress.

Iran has responded to the US attacks by targeting US bases in Gulf states and Jordan, and shipping in the narrow strait, which carried a fifth of the world’s oil and gas shipments before the war.

The UAE said on Saturday that Iran had attacked a carrier affiliated with its state oil company with a missile as it transited the Strait of Hormuz, with no injuries reported, in the latest escalation in attacks on shipping there.

There was no immediate comment from Iranian authorities. Iranian media quoted the UAE report without including

the part in which the country blamed Iran for the attack.

Iran blockade

In recent weeks, the Trump administration has repeatedly signaled that a deal to open the strait could be close, only to have Iran deny that talks are under way. It was unclear whether the latest flurry of negotiations would yield a more lasting arrangement.

“There is progress between Oman and Iran on the strait, and we expect a deal soon,” a US official told Reuters on Friday. “Once the deal is announced to restore commercial shipping without impediments, the United States will lift the blockade of Iranian ports.”

“As always, US actions will continue to be performance-based and tied to Iran’s implementation of its commitments,” the official said.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards also said on Saturday that re-opening the Strait of Hormuz depended on Washington accepting Iran’s conditions and was not related to the Iran-Oman negotiations.

Guards spokesperson Hossein Mohebbi did not specify the conditions but said Washington must stop interfering in the regional negotiation process.

“Whenever the United States accepts Iran’s conditions, the Strait of Hormuz will certainly be reopened,” he said, according to Iran’s Tasnim news agency.

Biggest concession

A proposed deal between Iran and Oman to help end five months of war between Iran and the US would give Tehran control over ships entering the Gulf through the strait, a senior Iranian source and two regional officials told Reuters on Wednesday, one of the biggest concessions yet to Iran.

US officials have repeatedly insisted they would never agree to Iran controlling access to the world’s most important trade route for energy supplies. It was not clear whether they had sought to change the parameters of the deal. Iran has used the hostilities to justify charging a toll on oil tankers.

Jorge Messi, Lionel Messi’s father & longtime agent, dies at 68

AP

Montevideo (Uruguay), Aug 8: Jorge Messi, the father of soccer star and Argentina captain Lionel Messi, died Saturday at a hospital in the central Argentina city of Rosario. He was 68.

The Rosario-based Club Atlético Newell’s Old Boys announced his death in a social media post that said he had undergone treatment in recent months for an unspecified illness. The post described him as “the pillar and the person who, with vision, rigor and affection, supported the career of the best player of all time, alongside his wife, Celia Cuccitini.”

The South American Football Confederation, CONMEBOL, in a statement also offered its condolences



“with respect and affection for Lionel.”

Lionel Messi led Argentina to a runner-up finish in this year’s World Cup. In the team’s first match, against Algeria, he was visibly emotional after scoring the first of his three goals. He said later that he wept for “a reason unrelated to sports.”

“I went through some difficult, complicated days,” he said. “I am grateful to the delegation, to all my teammates, because they were always by my side wishing me strength so that I would be OK.”

Media reports at the time outraged the Messi family, which days later released a statement confirming

that “Jorge is experiencing a health issue,” without specifying the nature of his condition.

“A person’s health and the peace of mind of their loved ones should not be the subject of speculation or irresponsible media interest,” according to the statement, which also expressed “discomfort at the lack of sensitivity, respect and scruples with which some people have treated a strictly private and family matter.”

Jorge Messi was a chemical technician and worked as a steelworker. He played soccer as a midfielder and reached the youth ranks of Newell’s Old Boys but had to abandon the sport to complete his mandatory military service in Argentina.

US Senate confirms Trump’s ex lawyer as attorney general

AFP

Washington, Aug 8: President Donald Trump’s former personal lawyer Todd Blanche was confirmed as US attorney general on Saturday after Senate Republicans shrugged off Democratic concerns over politicization of the Justice Department.

Blanche, who has already been serving as the top US law enforcement officer in an acting capacity, represented Trump as his private attorney in several criminal trials before entering government. The Senate, which Republicans narrowly control, confirmed him by 50 votes to 49. Trump, who has upended US political norms by seeking to bring nominally independent government agencies under his increasingly direct control, calls Blanche a “star.”

Democrats opposed Blanche from the beginning, accusing Trump of turning the Department of Justice into a political weapon.

“The attorney general is supposed to be the people’s lawyer,” Senator Dick Durbin, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said on Tuesday.

“Mr Blanche continues to operate as the president’s personal lawyer, treating the Justice Department like a law firm serving one client — the president.”

BCCI secy to visit COE to take stock of injury crisis, to meet with VVS Laxman



PTI

New Delhi, Aug 8: Concerned with the spate of injuries that has rocked Indian team of late, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia will be meeting Head Of Cricket VVS Laxman on Sunday to take a stock of the rehabilitation management programme at the Centre of Excellence (COE).

India will be missing the services of Jasprit Bumrah (knee swelling), B Sai Sudharsan (left foot big toe), Harshit Rana (hamstring), Nitish Kumar Reddy (hamstring) and Washington Sundar (quadriceps) due to various injuries. Akash Deep (lower back stress fracture) has been out for the longest time since Bengal’s Ranji Trophy semi-final defeat.

Adding to that, white ball experts Hardik Pandya (quadriceps), Varun Chakravathy (hamstring) and Prince Yadav (hamstring) are also at the Centre of Excellence where the Sports Science team is overworked without a figure head since the resignation of Nitin Patel in early 2025. Right now the challenge is to get all

these players back on the park.

Sudharsan and Bumrah were enlisted in the squad subject to fitness but COE’s team of experts decided to exercise caution looking at the bigger picture.

“Yes, secretary Saikia will be in Bengaluru to take a stock of the situation along with VVS Laxman. There is a meeting scheduled between the two. It is not known whether head coach of national team Gautam Gambhir or chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar will join online or not. It will be interesting if both Saikia and Laxman can front up and answer a few media queries with so many conjectures,” a BCCI source in the know told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

There are also rumours that COE and the current selection committee has always not been in sync with regards to the injury management timelines and some of the players being released before they ticked all the boxes.

The issue of Harshit Rana reaching England after being distinctly overweight has not gone down well with the selection committee.

Similarly, the selection committee was initially made to believe that Bumrah and Sudarshan will be at least available for one of the two Test matches.

However once the dust settled down, it was found that Bumrah, post impact injury is finding that there is water retention in his knee which requires more time to heal.

US reviews proposal to end 60-day grace period for foreign workers to find new jobs

PTI

Washington, Aug 8: The US is reviewing a proposal to eliminate the 60-day window for foreign workers holding non-immigrant visas to find employment after a job loss, a move that may force them to leave the country immediately.

A proposal from the Department of Homeland Security is currently under review at the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB), according to its website.

If finalised, the proposed regulation would eliminate the 60-day grace period accorded to certain principal non-immigrants and their dependents if the principal’s employment ceases before their period of stay expires.

Further details of the proposal are not immediately known. The 60-day grace period was introduced in 2017 to allow foreign workers and their dependents to stay in the US while searching for new employment after a job loss.

Immigration consultants said the Department of Homeland Security has the discretion to shorten or refuse the grace period, but has rarely done so.

INOX SRINAGAR

SHOW Timings

SUNDAY 9TH AUGUST

SPIDERMAN BRAND NEW DAY (HINDI) (U/A 13+)

10:00 AM
04:10 PM
07:15 PM

3D SPIDERMAN BRAND NEW DAY (3D ENGLISH ATMOS WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES) (U/A 13+)

11:00 AM
02:05 PM
05:10 PM
08:15 PM

SPIDERMAN BRAND NEW DAY (ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES) (U/A 13+)

12:00 PM
01:05 PM
06:20 PM

THE ODYSSEY (ENGLISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES) (A)

02:55 PM

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SPIDER-MAN BRAND NEW DAY

THE ODYSSEY