SATURDAY
21 November 2026

Volume: 17
Issue No: 225
Pages: 08
Price: ₹2

Kashmir Thunder

SCAN TO VISIT

This newspaper is the sister concern of news agency Kashmir News Observer (KNO)

www.kashmirthunder.in | epaper.kashmirthunder.in | twitter.com / kashmirthunder | facebook.com/kashmirthundernews | Regd. No. JKENG/2010/39938

Tear down entire terrorist, separatist ecosystem: LG Sinha directs officials

Set district-specific targets for seizure, forfeiture of properties linked to anti-national elements; 'treat attaching properties of anti-national elements as top priority'

Yogesh

Jammu, Nov 20: Directing officials to look beyond traditional policing and work towards completely tearing down the terror and separatist ecosystem, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday called for intensified winter surveillance, security preparedness and complete operational control.

Chairing a high-level meeting with Deputy Commissioners, SSPs, and senior officials to review the security scenario, winter readiness, and key infrastructure projects across Jammu Division, LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "Our goal cannot stop at neutralising terrorists. We must teardown the entire terrorist, separatist ecosystem that sustains them."

He instructed Deputy Commissioners and SSPs to appoint dedicated nodal officers and set district-specific targets for the seizure and forfeiture of properties linked to



anti-national elements.

"Attaching and forfeiting properties linked to terrorist and separatist elements must be treated as a top priority," he said.

LAUDS ADMIN, J&K POLICE FOR PEACEFUL CONDUCT OF 'NASHA MUKT ABHIYAN

Lauding the Administration and J&K Police for the peaceful conduct of the 'Nasha Mukt J&K Abhiyan,' the Lieutenant Governor stressed that the anti-drug drive must continue with the same intensity.

The Lieutenant Governor asked the officers to make sure that grievances of common man are heard.

"Ensuring that citizens' grievances receive a fair hearing is a core duty, requiring a dedicated institutional mechanism for grievance redressal with zero tolerance for negligence at any level," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor further directed for strict vigilance against encroachments along the Line of Control and the International Border (IB). He directed for crackdown against illegal mining, drugs and bovine smuggling and establishing joint social media cells to counter fake news.

"Operations against narco-terrorists must continue relentlessly. We must aim to completely dismantle the narco-terror ecosystem," he said.

The meeting also reviewed the progress achieved under the Vibrant Villages Programme across Jammu Division.

The meeting was attended by Chief | More on P6

NIA CONFERENCE

Terror, organised crime, drugs must be eliminated: Amit Shah

Calls for stronger state ATS units, unified anti-terror framework

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Nov 20: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday called for strengthening state Anti-Terrorism Squads (ATS) and integrating police stations into the country's counter-terror framework, stressing the need for coordinated action against cross-border terrorism and the wider terror ecosystem.

Addressing the two-day 6th Anti-Terror Conference organised by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in New Delhi, Shah said terror networks, organised crime syndicates and drug trafficking operations must be tackled in a coordinated manner. He also credited security forces and investigative agencies for improving the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, claiming the Valley was now free of locally recruited terrorists.



The conference, held on November 19 and 20, brought together senior police officials, heads of central and state agencies, investigators and security experts to discuss emerging security challenges.

Shah, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said counter-terror investigations must focus on dismantling entire networks, including handlers, financiers, organised crime links and local facilitators. He stressed that central and state agencies should work towards shared objectives with clearly defined responsibilities and accountability.

He also emphasised the need for strengthening financial investigations in terror cases and targeting the full chain of terror funding.

Calling for enhanced cyber capabilities, Shah urged states to | More on P6

Mercury rises across J&K, Sgr climbs above freezing point

Pahalgam records minus 2.2 degrees Celsius; dry weather likely till Nov 30

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Nov 20: Night temperatures improved marginally across most parts of Jammu and Kashmir, bringing slight relief from the prevailing cold conditions, with Srinagar recording a minimum temperature of 0.2 degrees Celsius and moving above the freezing point after several days.

A weather department official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that Srinagar recorded a low of 0.2 degrees Celsius against minus 0.2 degrees Celsius on the previous night.

Tourist resort Pahalgam in south Kashmir recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.2 degrees Celsius, up from minus 2.8 degrees Celsius a day earlier, while Gulmarg recorded minus 0.4 degrees Celsius against minus 1.0 degrees Celsius.

Kupwara in north Kashmir registered a minimum of minus 1.1 degrees Celsius compared to minus 1.3 degrees Celsius the previous night.

Qazigund recorded minus 0.8 degrees Celsius, unchanged from the previous night, while Kokernag registered 0.7



degrees Celsius against 1.0 degrees Celsius a day earlier.

In the Jammu division, Jammu city recorded a minimum temperature of 11.7 degrees Celsius against 10.8 degrees Celsius the previous night. Katra recorded 11.0 degrees Celsius, Banihal 9.4 degrees Celsius, Batote 7.2 degrees Celsius and Bhaderwah 3.2 degrees Celsius.

The marginal rise in temperatures notwithstanding, signs of the prevailing cold conditions remained visible in parts of south Kashmir, where icicles were seen covering vegetation in the Kokernag area of Anantnag district.

A meteorologist said dry weather was expected to prevail across Jammu and Kashmir until | More on P6



A man harvests lotus stems, locally known in Kashmir as nadru or nadur, from a shallow wetland near Srinagar. The stems are gathered from lakes and wetlands across the Kashmir Valley, including Sangam Anchar Lake.

Pics: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

Jhelum, tributaries record low water levels across Kashmir

River flowing well below reference levels, Wular Lake 4.10 metres below benchmark

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Nov 20: Water levels in the Jhelum and its major tributaries remained low across Kashmir on Friday, with gauge readings showing the river flowing significantly below reference levels at all monitoring stations.

According to data available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Jhelum was flowing at minus 0.64 feet at Sangam against the reference mark of 21 feet. At Munshi Bagh in Srinagar, the level was recorded at 3.81 feet against 18 feet, while at Asham it stood at 1.30 feet against 14 feet.

At Pampore, the river level was recorded at 1.01 metres, compared to the reference mark of 4.5 metres.

Wular Lake's water level stood at 1,573.90 metres, which is 4.10 metres below its reference level of 1,578 metres.

Among the tributaries, Vishow Nallah at Khudwani recorded 2.41 metres against a reference mark of 7.75 metres, while Rambiyara Nallah at Wachi stood at minus 0.44 metres against 5.4 metres.

Lidder Nallah | More on P6

J&K unveils SOP for handing over revenue records to probe agencies

Original documents to be reclaimed within 3 months; quarterly monitoring ordered

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Nov 20: The Jammu & Kashmir Government has issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for handing over original revenue records to investigating agencies for forensic analysis and examination.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in a move to protect the integrity of public records as well as ensure their safe return, the SOP lays down a detailed procedure to be followed before any original revenue record is handed over to an investigating agency.

Under the SOP, the concerned Deputy Commissioner or Regional Director, Survey



and Land Records (RDSLR), must ensure that the complete scanning of original records is carried out before they are handed over. Authenticated copies of all scanned documents are to be prepared, certified and signed by the Deputy Commissioner, RDSLR, or an officer specifically authorized by them in writing.

The SOP, issued by the Financial Commissioner (Revenue) on October 30, 2026, directs that the complete scanned record be uploaded to the relevant e-Office file for future reference.

According to the guidelines, original records can be handed over only against a proper receipt signed by an authorized officer of the requisitioning investigating | More on P6

Tech-driven initiatives make judicial system transparent: Chief Justice

Naveed Ul Haq Ganaiee

Budgam, Nov 20: Stating that technology-driven initiatives are playing an important role in making the judicial system more transparent and accessible, Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, Justice Dr Pushpendra Singh Bhati, on Friday emphasised on the need to strengthen access to justice for every citizen.

Talking to reporters during his visit to District Court Budgam, accompanied by Justice Sindhu Sharma, the Chief Justice as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that the judiciary is making continuous efforts to ensure that people, irrespective of their geographical location, could access justice and judicial services.

Highlighting the role of technology in judicial reforms, Justice Bhati said that court orders and proceedings are now



uploaded online, often within an hour after the court rises, enabling litigants and members of the public to access information from anywhere.

He said that through video conferencing, people sitting in even remote corners of the country could follow judicial proceedings, adding that such initiatives were helping strengthen transparency and public trust in the judicial system.

Recalling the transformation over the past 35 years, he said that earlier litigants would receive information about their cases through postal communication, sometimes only once a year, whereas technology had significantly improved access to judicial information.

The Chief Justice also stressed the importance of adopting technology and modern tools in the functioning of courts, urging members of the Bar and Bench to make continuous efforts towards embracing technological advancements.

Regarding judicial infrastructure in Budgam, Justice Bhati said that land has already been identified for a new court complex and expressed hope that the project would take shape soon. He also said that a proposal for an additional court facility in the Khansahib area was pending with the government.

The Chief Justice interacted with members of the District Bar Association Budgam, who raised various issues and demands concerning judicial infrastructure and the functioning of courts.

Deputy Commissioner Budgam Jatin Kishore, SSP Budgam Hariprasad K.K, senior police and administrative officers were also present on the occasion. (KNO)

DC Srinagar reviews status, disposal of various public welfare-related services



The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz, Additional Deputy Commissioner Aadil Fareed, SDM West, Seerat Baji, IAS Probationer, Aakash Garg, SDM East, Zubair Ahmad, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar, all Tehsildars, representative of ADGP CID and R&B Department. The meeting reviewed the status of various cases of public welfare nature including SRO-43, financial assistance under the Red Cross Fund, immediate relief to fire victims, compensation to road accident victims, rent assessment, and other related services.

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Friday chaired a meeting of senior Officers at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex, to review the status and progress of various public welfare-related cases to ensure their prompt and effective disposal.

The meeting, as per an official statement, was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz, Additional Deputy Commissioner Aadil Fareed, SDM West, Seerat Baji, IAS Probationer, Aakash Garg, SDM East, Zubair Ahmad, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar, all Tehsildars, representative of ADGP CID and R&B Department. The meeting reviewed the status of various cases of public welfare nature including SRO-43, financial assistance under the Red Cross Fund, immediate relief to fire victims, compensation to road accident victims, rent assessment, and other related services.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner stressed the need for time-bound processing and efficient disposal of all pending cases, emphasising that unnecessary delays should not cause inconvenience to the public.

He directed the concerned Officers to take necessary measures to expedite the disposal of pending cases and ensure that eligible beneficiaries receive assistance and benefits without undue delay. The DC particularly emphasised the importance of extending timely relief to fire-affected families, providing compensation to road accident victims and facilitating eligible persons seeking assistance under the Red Cross Fund and SRO-43. He emphasized that all Departments must work in a coordinated and result-oriented manner to ensure transparency, accountability and prompt delivery of public services.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed that addressing public grievances and ensuring timely delivery of benefits to deserving beneficiaries must remain a priority of the District Administration and other stakeholder Departments.

DC Shopian conducts surprise inspection of various government offices across District

Checks attendance, reviews functioning of Offices



KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, NOVEMBER 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Charandeep Singh, Friday conducted a surprise inspection of various government offices across the district to assess punctuality, attendance and the overall functioning of government establishments.

During the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner visited the offices of the Block Medical Office Shopian, Tehsil Office Shopian, Roads and Buildings (R&B) Division Shopian and Block Development Office Shopian.

He inspected attendance registers and verified the presence of officers and employees. He also took stock of the day-to-day functioning of the offices and reviewed the status of official work to assess efficiency and ensure timely delivery of public services. During the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, took serious note of instances of unauthorized absence and dereliction of duty and directed the issuance of show-cause notices to the delinquent officers/officials, seeking their explanation for the lapses observed.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed the importance of maintaining punctuality, discipline and accountability in government offices. He directed the concerned officers and officials to ensure regular attendance, timely disposal of official work and prompt delivery of public services.

Youth Fest 2026–27

DIET Shopian organises district-level Red Ribbon Quiz competition



KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, NOVEMBER 20: The District Institute of Education and Trainings (DIET), Shopian, successfully organised a School-Level and District-Level Red Ribbon Quiz Competition at DIET Complex Shopian, as part of Youth Fest 2026–27.

The Competition, as per an official statement, organised in collaboration with the J&K AIDS Control Society (JKACS) and the Health & Medical Education Department, aimed to sensitise students and enhance their awareness and knowledge about critical health-related issues, including HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene and the importance of eliminating social taboos, stigma and discrimination associated with health-related concerns.

The competition witnessed enthusiastic participation from students through a two-tier selection process. The preliminary school-level competitions were conducted across participating institutions, following which the top ten school teams were shortlisted to compete at the district level, providing students with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, confidence and understanding of various health-related subjects.

On the occasion, Principal DIET Shopian, Neetu Gandotra, interacted with the participating students and highlighted the objectives and significance of organising such awareness-based educational activities. She emphasised the pivotal role of youth in disseminating accurate health information, promoting healthy practices and challenging social stigmas through awareness and informed community participation.

DC Shopian reviews Mission YUVA

Stresses effective implementation of key initiatives

KT News Desk

SHOPIAN, NOVEMBER 20: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Charandeep Singh, Friday chaired a meeting of the District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) to review the progress achieved under Mission YUVA and assess the implementation of various initiatives being undertaken under the programme. At the outset, Assistant Director Employment, Dr. Nida Yousuf, briefed the Deputy Commissioner about the applications received, approved, sanctioned and disbursed under the scheme. She also apprised the chair regarding the status of applications at various stages of processing and the measures being taken to facilitate aspiring entrepreneurs.

The Deputy Commissioner, as per an official statement, stressed the need to increase the number of applications, particularly from genuine and deserving applicants having viable business ideas. He directed the concerned officers to intensify outreach activities and organise special awareness and facilitation camps to mobilise eligible youth, expedite application processing and ensure timely delivery of benefits. Emphasising interdepartmental coordination, the Deputy Commissioner called for regular monitoring of applications and prompt resolution of issues faced by prospective beneficiaries. He observed that Mission YUVA is a transformative initiative aimed at empowering youth to become self-reliant entrepreneurs through financial assistance, skill development, capacity building and sustained mentorship. He directed all concerned departments, financial institutions and implementing agencies to ensure time-bound sanctioning of cases, hassle-free disbursement of financial assistance and elimination of unnecessary pendency.

The Deputy Commissioner further emphasised the importance of continuous monitoring, skill enhancement, handholding support and improved market linkages to ensure the long-term sustainability of enterprises established under the programme. He also reiterated that special attention must be given to underprivileged and marginalised sections of society to strengthen their socio-economic conditions through sustainable livelihood opportunities. He directed all concerned officers to work in close coordination, intensify awareness campaigns and ensure effective implementation of all components of Mission YUVA, with particular focus on promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship among the youth.

2-day nature exploration event held at Manasbal concludes



KT News Desk

MANASBAL(GANDERBAL), NOVEMBER 20: The two-day Nature Exploration event organised by Wullar Manasbal Development Authority (WMDA) in collaboration with Government Degree College(GDC), Ganderbal concluded here Friday.

The event, as per an official statement, drew enthusiastic response from students of GDC, Ganderbal, Nature lovers, visitors and local stakeholders alike.

As part of the event, Friday a painting competition was held on the twin themes of Nature conservation and drug abuse during which students put their varied thoughts on paper and canvas to convey their deep commitment for Nature conservation and against drug abuse.

Well known visual artist and calligrapher, Saiqa Rashid was the expert on the occasion to judge the art pieces.

The conclusion of the two-day event was marked by distribution of prizes and commendations among the students and volunteers.

Chief Executive Officer, WMDA, Dr Ahsanul Haq Chishti and head of Central Silk Board, Manasbal, Dr Rajesh Kumar gave away the prizes and commendations among the participant students and volunteers.

In his address the CEO said WMDA would continue to provide a platform to all the creative endeavours and art activities to strengthen our connection with Nature and firm up society's resolve to conserve Nature and fight drug abuse. He thanked the cooperation rendered by Government Degree College, Ganderbal in this regard.

Dr Rajesh Kumar in address on the occasion laid stress on collaborative efforts to conserve Nature and fight substance abuse. He also detailed the initiatives being taken by his organisation in this regard and also promoting the local artistry.

Programme Coordinator of GDC, Ganderbal, Dr Jamsheeda Akhter highlighted the role and activities of NSS unit in spreading awareness on nature conservation and drug abuse. She hoped that many more such events would be conducted in days to come.

Earlier, on the first day, NSS volunteers from GDC Ganderbal, joined by sanitation field staff and officials of WMDA undertook a massive day long cleanliness drive along the banks of Manasbal lake spreading through Kondabal, Jarokabal, Baghwan Mohalla and adjoining areas during which local residents also joined the cleanliness campaign.

During the drive, aimed to promote environmental conservation, cleanliness and awareness against drug abuse, participants and locals were also sensitised about the harmful effects of improper waste disposal and environmental pollution and encouraged to adopt responsible waste-management practices.

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER PIR-PANJAL FOREST DIVISION BUDGAM.

e-NIT NO: - 14 OF 2026-27 DATED: 19-11-2026

For and on behalf of the Hon'ble President of India, e-tenders (Two cover system) are invited from registered, reputed and resourceful Contractors/Firms registered with Jammu &Kashmir Govt./Central Govt. Organizations for the following work: -

S.NO	NAME OF WORK	ADV. C/OST (Rs. In lacs)	Bid Security (EMD)INR	CLASS OF CONTRACTOR	Cost of Tender Document. Rs)	TIME OF COMPLETION
1	Providing & Fixing of Barbed Wire Fencing with Angle Iron fence posts in Cement Concrete Blocks & Planting of Conifer Plants, Dibbling & Patch sowing in compartment D-19a Forest Negoo Block (0.61 Hac's = 1162 rft) of Doodganga Forest Range of Pir Panjal Forest Division Budgam for the year 2026-27 under the scheme of CAMPA-CA.	3.24 Lacs	Rs.6480/=	" D " Class PWD Contractor/Forest Contractor,	Rs 200/=	45 Calendar days
2	Fencing Repair & Enrichment Planting in various compartments of different blocks of Doodganga, Sukhnagh & Raithan Ranges under **the scheme of CAMPA-CA for the fi**-nanical Year 2026-27 Fencing Repair 11300 Rfts's Plantation 19300 No's	7.40 Lacs	Rs.14800/=	" C & D " Class PWD Contractor/Forest Contractor,	Rs 300/=	45 Calendar days

The work mentioned at S. No: 01 was previously tendered vide this office e-NIT No: 07 of 2026-27 Dated: 15.09.2026, e-NIT No: 09 of 2026-27 Dated: 08.10.2026, e-NIT No: 13 of 2026-27 Dated: 09.11.2026 and the work figuring at S. No: 2 was tendered vide this office e-NIT No: 13 of 2026-27 Dated: 09.11.2026. Now due to poor response both the works are tendered a fresh.
The e-NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, bills of quantities, (B.O.Q) set of Terms & Conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the Website: -www.jktenders.gov.in.
Position of AA: Accorded vide Order No. 49 of 2026-27/CF (Sgr) of 2026 Dated. 11-09-2026 & Order No. 13/CCF (K) of 2026 Dated. 07-11-2026.
Position of TS: Accorded vide Order No. 48 of 2026-27/CF (Sgr) of 2026 Dated. 11-09-2026 & Order No. 13/CCF (K) of 2026 Dated. 07-11-2026.

Position of Funds : Budgeted.

Publishing Date: -	19-11-2026
Download Start Date:	19-11-2026 from 02:00 PM
Bid submission Start Date:	19-11-2026 from 04:00 PM
Bid submission End Date:	25-11-2026 Up to 06.00 PM
Date of Opening of Technical BidOnline.	26-11-2026 at 11:.00 AM in the Office of the Conservator of Forests Srinagar Circle at Shiekh Bagh Srinagar.
Date of Opening of Financial Bid Online:	To be opened (Online) afterTechnical Evaluation is Completed. Date will be notified separately.

TERMS & CONDITIONS
1. The bids shall be deposited in electronic format on the website: https://jktenders.gov.in.
2. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 90 days from the date of opening of bids.
3. The bidders have to submit their Technical & Financial bids online in electronic format with digital signature. No Technical or **financial bid shall be accepted in physical/hard form. Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned above.**
4. Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copies of all necessary documents i.e., Valid Registration Card issued by PWD/CPWD/ **duly renewed for the current year 2026-27, PAN, Valid GST Registration,), Affidavit cum undertaking.**
5. In pursuance to Finance Department Circular instructions vide No. FD-Code/290/2026 dated: 22-05-2026 to implement online system for depositing Bid security (EMD) and Tender Fee across all works Departments. The Bidders shall deposit the EMD, IT Service Charges & tender Fee in the Centralized Pooling Bank Account of this Department. The details of the Accounts are as.
Account in favor of : Principal Chief Conservator Forests
Name of the Bank: Jammu and Kashmir Bank.
Branch : Civil Secretariat
IFSC Code : JAKA0MOVING
Account No : 0110010200001102
7. The above deposits should be made in separate Transactions and upload the transaction Receipts/ Fee deposit Receipt with the necessary documents to be uploaded above.
8. As per rule Guideline No. 4.12 of Manual for procurement of works from Govt of India, Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure, performance Security shall have to be deposited by successful bidder to the order of 5% of the value of contract
9. The Department will not be responsible for any delay in online submission of the bid due to any reason (technical or otherwise).
10. The Department shall not be held responsible for selection criteria/policy matter being adopted by the Directorate of Information regarding publishing the NIT, in any of the newspaper under circulation.
11. The Tender Accepting Authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
12. All other terms and conditions shall remain same as per PWD form 25 (double leaf) and as per the Detailed Tender document.
01.
NO:- DFO/PP/Actt/Tender/2026-27/1077-86
Dated:- 19-11-2026.

DIPK-7855/26
DATED: 20-11-2026

Divisional Forest Officer,

GTA VI fever grips Srinagar

Gaming cafes buzz after 13-year wait

Rehan Qayoom Mir



Srinagar, Nov 20: GTA fever has gripped Srinagar city, with gaming enthusiasts making a beeline for gaming cafes to experience Grand Theft Auto VI (GTA VI), the blockbuster release that has ended a wait of more than 13 years since its predecessor hit the screens in 2013.

At Velocity, a gaming hub in Sonwar, the excitement is translating into a steady rush of players, with enthusiasts turning up throughout the day to explore the latest instalment of Rockstar Games' globally popular franchise.

Dayan Manzoor, owner of Velocity, told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the response has been overwhelming, with people from different age groups visiting the centre.

"The rush has been amazing. We remain open from 11 am until around 10 to 10:30 pm and people keep coming to play the game," he said, adding that the centre has maintained an 18-plus entry restriction for GTA VI.

For Fayiq Ahmad, a resident of Lal Bazar and an esports gamer and developer, the excitement carries a special significance after more than a decade of waiting.

"Many of us grew up playing GTA V. After 13 years, getting a new instalment feels special. There is curiosity about everything, from the graphics and gameplay to how much the virtual world has changed," he said. Sufaim Mushtaq, another gaming enthusiast from Khanyar, said the release has generated considerable excitement among local players, many of whom are eager to experience the new features and expansive virtual world.

The GTA VI buzz has also reached the country's political conversation, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi joining the excitement through a post on X.

"India is playing a whole new game!" Modi wrote, sharing GTA-inspired graphics comparing India's transformation between 2013, when GTA V was released, and 2026.

Released on November 19, GTA VI marks the latest chapter in Rockstar Games' hugely popular franchise, bringing an end to one of gaming's longest-awaited sequels—(KNO)

CJ visits Court Complex Budgam

Emphasizes collective efforts to strengthen Justice System

KT News Desk



Budgam, Nov 20: Dr. Justice Pushpendra Singh Bhati, Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, accompanied by Justice Sindhu Sharma, Administrative Judge for District Budgam on Friday visited District Court Complex, Budgam.

Chief Justice was accorded a ceremonial Guard of Honour and was warmly welcomed by the Principal District and Sessions Judge, Budgam, O.P. Bhagat.

Deputy Commissioner Budgam Jatin Kishore, Senior Superintendent of Police Budgam Hariprasad KK, along with other Judicial and administrative officers were present on the occasion.

Judges from the Registry, M.K Sharma, Registrar General, Haq Nawaz Zargar, Principal Secretary to Chief Justice, members of the District Judiciary, court staff, officials of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) were also present.

Chief Justice, in his address, emphasised the collective responsibility of the Bar, Bench and administration in strengthening the justice delivery system and upholding public trust. He highlighted the importance of adopting emerging technologies particularly Artificial Intelligence with due caution to enhance transparency, efficiency and speedy delivery of justice.

Dr. Justice Pushpendra Singh Bhati stressed the need to strengthen the Bar and Bench, promote better facilities and opportunities for women lawyers and uphold the highest standards of professionalism and judicial accountability. Referring to the forthcoming centenary celebrations of the judicial institution on 28th March 2027, he called upon all members of the legal fraternity across Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh to actively participate in this historic milestone and reaffirm their commitment to justice and public service. He assured that suggestions for institutional improvement would be considered.

The presence of Justice Sindhu Sharma, was particularly significant in view of her administrative association with the district. The occasion provided an opportunity to acknowledge the role of the District Judiciary in ensuring effective judicial administration and the importance of coordinated efforts among all institutions associated with the justice delivery mechanism.

The District Bar Association Budgam, through its President, submitted a memorandum seeking urgent intervention for strengthening judicial infrastructure in the district. The key demands included construction of new Court Complex at Budgam, establishment of a separate NIA Court and additional judicial courts, construction of Court Complexes at Charar-i-Sharief and Beerwah and a Munsiff Court at Khansahib, provision of additional advocates' chambers, upgradation of the Ladies' Bar Room, development of parking facilities, and construction of separate photocopy and canteen facilities for advocates. The Association emphasized that these measures are essential for improving judicial efficiency, addressing infrastructural deficiencies, facilitating the legal fraternity and ensuring better access and convenience for litigants and the general public.

The programme was also attended by advocates from all four Tehsils of District Budgam, represented by their respective Bar Association Presidents.

A significant highlight of the occasion was release of the magazine published by the District Legal Services Authority, Budgam under the supervision and guidance of J&K Legal Services Authority by the Chief Justice, Dr. Justice Pushpendra Singh Bhati (Parton in Chief J&K Legal Services Authority).

The programme concluded with a formal Vote of Thanks presented by Additional District Judge Budgam, Yahya Firdous.

JKSSB Exam Controversies....

Sajad Lone, Iltija Mufti allege recruitment irregularities

Rehan Qayoom Mir



Srinagar, Nov 20 (KNO): Jammu and Kashmir's recruitment system came under fresh fire on Friday, with Peoples Conference president Sajad Lone and PDP leader Iltija Mufti raising serious questions over the JKSSB's handling of examination controversies.

Reacting to the controversy surrounding the Finance Accounts Assistant (FAA) examination, Lone as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), questioned the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board's (JKSSB) claim that the examination had been corrected, saying statistically unusual marks trends had raised further doubts about the fairness of the process.

"I have heard that the SSB has stated that we have corrected the exam. I don't understand this. Cheating happens mostly in Jammu and if we look at the trends of marks, the unnatural trends statistically have also come from Jammu," he said.

Lone said the controversy is playing with the future of children and argued that the Board needed to take concrete steps so that aspirants did not feel cheated. "As on date, it does seem that cheating has taken place. And yet again, the government is not in a mood to accept that cheating has taken place," he said.

Questioning the Board's overall track record, he said its performance had not been satisfactory over the years, while also flagging reservation-related concerns and alleged underhand dealings in recruitment.

Meanwhile, PDP leader Iltija Mufti addressed a press conference this afternoon and saying "recruitment mafia" is operating in Jammu and Kashmir in collusion with government employees.

She rejected the JKSSB's description of the alleged cheating in the FAA examination as a one-off incident.

Iltija, daughter of PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, said recruitment controversies had repeatedly surfaced since 2019, referring to examinations for Police Sub-Inspectors, Jal Shakti, Finance Accounts Assistants and Fire and Emergency Services.

"How can JKSSB give itself a clean chit so soon? This is not a one-off incident. There is a proper mafia operating in the recruitment system," she said, demanding an impartial investigation into the latest controversy.

She also questioned the alleged

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

Muezzin injured in knife attack during Azaan

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Nov 20: A 72-year-old muezzin was critically injured after being attacked with a knife while calling the Azaan at a mosque in Srinagar's Lal Bazar area on Friday, officials and eyewitnesses said.

The victim, Mohammad Hashim Khanana, son of late Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din and a resident of Umar Colony, Lal Bazar, was making the call to prayer at Masjid Char Yaar in Bota Shah Mohalla when he was allegedly attacked from behind with a sharp-edged weapon.

An eyewitness said that the muezzin was reciting the Azaan when a local resident approached him and stabbed him from behind.

Despite the attack, Khanana managed to raise an alarm through the mosque's loudspeaker, prompting residents to rush to the scene, the eyewitness said.

He said the muezzin was found lying in a pool of blood inside the mosque premises. The attacker allegedly dragged the injured man towards the mosque's main gate before police reached the spot.

The injured muezzin was shifted to SKIMS for treatment, where his condition was stated to be critical.

Police have arrested the accused, identified as Yasir Lateef Fazili. A case has been registered and an investigation to ascertain the motive and circumstances behind the attack has been launched—(KNO)

Patients flag staff shortages at JLNM hospital

Allege dependence on PG students

Naveed Ul Haq Ganaiee



Srinagar, Nov 20: Patients and attendants visiting Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial (JLNM) Hospital at Rainawari in Srinagar have raised concerns over the functioning of several departments, alleging that an acute shortage of qualified medical staff and inadequate manpower are affecting healthcare services at the government-run facility.

The patients alleged that the hospital, which caters to a considerable number of people from Srinagar and adjoining areas, is facing a shortage of doctors, particularly in the Radiology Department, while the limited availability of medical officers is also putting additional pressure on the existing staff.

According to patients and attendants, the hospital presently has only one Radiologist available for five days a week, leaving the department under considerable pressure, particularly in view of the number of patients requiring ultrasound, CT scans and other diagnostic investigations. They alleged that the shortage of specialist doctors has raised questions about the timely availability of diagnostic services, with patients often having to wait for investigations and reports.

"The hospital receives a large number of patients every day, but the availability of specialist doctors is not proportionate to the patient load. Having only one Radiologist for five days a week is a matter of concern, particularly for patients who depend on the hospital for timely diagnosis," an attendant said.

Several patients also claimed that postgraduate students are involved in the reporting of CT scans, raising concerns about the extent of their responsibilities and the availability of senior specialists for reviewing diagnostic findings. They further alleged that students are also seen performing or assisting in X-ray-related work.

Attendants said that although medical students and postgraduate residents are part of the academic and practical training system, their involvement should not create an impression that essential diagnostic services are being managed without adequate availability of qualified professionals. "There should be sufficient senior doctors and technical staff to ensure that patients receive proper attention and that all investigations are conducted under adequate professional supervision," another patient said.

Concerns have also been raised over the availability of Medical Officers during night hours, with patients alleging that only a limited number of doctors are deployed on night duty, making it difficult to manage the patient load, particularly during emergencies. Some patients also claimed that certain departments are being headed or managed by doctors engaged under the National Health Mission, reflecting the shortage of regular medical personnel.

The attendants urged the Health and Medical Education Department and hospital administration to assess the existing manpower position, fill vacant specialist and Medical Officer posts and ensure adequate staffing across departments.

Continued on www.kashmirthunder.in

GMC non-gazetted employees continue protest over service rules



Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Nov 20: Non-gazetted employees of five newly established Government Medical Colleges (GMCs) in Jammu and Kashmir continued their protest for the fifth consecutive day on Friday, demanding immediate notification of long-pending Service Recruitment Rules (SRRs).

The protests are being held at GMCs in Rajouri, Doda, Kathua, Baramulla and Anantnag, with employees alleging that the absence of notified service rules for nearly seven years has adversely affected their seniority, promotions, career progression and other service benefits.

As part of the agitation, employees of GMC Rajouri held a peaceful march from the Associated Hospital premises to Gujjar Mandi Chowk after obtaining the necessary permissions from the authorities.

The employees said they resumed their protest on November 16 after the government failed to meet the September 30 deadline announced by Health and Medical Education Minister Sakina Itoo for finalising the recruitment rules.

According to the protesters, the delay has left hundreds of employees without a defined service framework and has also affected recruitment to non-gazetted posts in the medical colleges. They said no fresh recruitment advertisement has been issued for such posts since the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board's first notification in 2019.

The employees alleged that while gazetted officers have received multiple promotional advancements since 2019, non-gazetted staff continue to await a formal service structure.

They have demanded immediate notification of the Service Recruitment Rules, initiation of pending Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC) proceedings and assessment of the service-related and financial losses suffered due to the delay—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

Digital Progress Must Reach The Last Mile

The numbers tell a story of progress. Jammu and Kashmir now has 1,718 government services on digital platforms, with 368 added in the last year. Nearly 38.68 lakh people are registered on DigiLocker, over 93 lakh academic records are accessible, and the Mobile Dost application offers 1,548 services on a phone. The Union Territory has also secured first position among Union Territories in the National e-Services Delivery Assessment ranking. These are not small achievements. They mean a citizen no longer has to stand in a queue for a certificate that can be issued online. But digital governance is not just about adding services to a portal but about making sure that those services actually work, that they are secure, and that they reach the people who need them most. A website that is not maintained, a portal that crashes, an application that is never updated — these do more damage than having no service at all, because they erode public trust. A citizen who tries once and fails rarely tries again. Cybersecurity is the quiet foundation on which all of this rests. Government platforms hold personal data, land records, financial details and health information. Regular security audits are not optional. Reminders must be built into the system so that audits are not forgotten until they expire. Every department must own its platforms and be accountable for their upkeep, not leave the burden on the IT Department alone. The push towards paperless administration is also welcome. If the government expects citizens to go digital, its own decision-making must do the same. An e-Cabinet is not a luxury; it is a statement of intent. Clear timelines matter equally. Digital projects have a habit of slipping quietly, without anyone being held responsible. Regular monitoring, fixed deadlines and visible accountability are essential. Technology should simplify the citizen's life, not complicate it. The test of a digital service is simple: can a person in a remote village use it without help, without a bribe, and without a second visit? If the answer is yes, digital governance has succeeded. If not, the work remains unfinished.

'Naturopathy': Natural Remedies For A Healthy India

Treatment, Training, Research And Care Across The Country

Press Information Bureau

Naturopathy is a drug-free and cost-effective system that helps the body heal itself through diet, fasting, water, mud, massage and natural living. India celebrates 'National Naturopathy Day' on November 18, and its 9th edition will be held in Nagamangala, Karnataka under the theme 'Naturopathy, Healthy India'. The Pune-based National Institute of Naturopathy runs 'Nisarg Gram', a 250-bed naturopathy hospital. It is also the first college under the Central Government to offer 'Bachelor of Naturopathy and Yogic Sciences' (BNYS).



Treatment from nature

Naturopathy is based on a simple idea: the body has the power to heal itself. Rooted in traditional medicine from many cultures, it is a cost-effective, drug-free system that uses natural ingredients for health care and healthy living. It works by enhancing the body's own life force by drawing on the five elements of nature—earth, water, air, fire, and space.

Naturopathy is a system of natural healing and a way of life. It calls for a "return to nature": a simple diet and lifestyle, and a balanced life in harmony with self, society, and the environment. It has the potential to improve health, prevent, treat, and aid recovery from disease.

Treatment in naturopathy

A naturopath uses natural remedies such as fasting and diet, hydrotherapy, mud packs, cold packs, baths, and massage. The National Institute of Naturopathy's Pune campus, Nisarg Gram, also offers treatment sections such as magnetotherapy, chromotherapy, and physiotherapy. It also has a yoga hall and a Satvik diet center.

In which diseases is naturopathy effective?

Naturopathy has been shown to be effective in treating chronic diseases, allergies, autoimmune diseases, organ dysfunction, and stress-related disorders. Nutrition, naturopathy, and lifestyle changes have gained renewed importance as people focus more on lifestyle disorders, obesity, stress, and healthy living in old age. A healthy diet, physical activity, adequate rest, and stress management can be helpful in preventive health care for people of all ages.

Naturopathy and Yoga in India

Naturopathy in India is linked to yoga. According to the National Institute of Naturopathy, Indian naturopathy encompasses yoga as well as ancient Indian concepts such as the Panchabhuta (five elements) for understanding health and disease. Over time, it has evolved into a holistic system that treats and prevents diseases and teaches people to live healthy lives in close proximity to nature. Along with Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa, and homeopathy, yoga and naturopathy are included together in the AYUSH systems. At the National Conference on Naturopathy (2026), the Ministry of AYUSH reiterated that yoga and naturopathy complement each other. The government has created an entire system around this integration: a degree that integrates naturopathy with yogic science; a research council for both—the Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy (CCRYN); a central registration of practitioners; and the country's first national naturopathy hospital.

9th National Naturopathy Day: Naturopathy, Healthy India

The 9th National Naturopathy Day will be celebrated on November 18, 2026, at the Central Research Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy (CRIYN), Nagamangala, Karnataka. The theme is "Naturopathy, Healthy India," which prioritizes disease prevention. It emphasizes balanced diet, physical activity, yoga, and stress management, with a focus on obesity prevention. The event is in line with the Prime Minister's vision of a "Fit and Healthy India". Shri Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State for AYUSH (Independent Charge) and Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, said:

"Naturopathy inspires us to understand the deep connection between lifestyle, nature, and holistic health. Our focus is on strengthening its scientific basis through credible research, quality education, and responsible integration with traditional healthcare."

Mahatma Gandhi and the beginning of Naturopathy Day

Naturopathy Day is dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi's commitment to naturopathy. On 18 November 1945, he became the life president of the Pune-based All India Nature Cure Foundation Trust and signed its deed. The Ministry of AYUSH announced the date for celebrating 'Naturopathy Day' every year, starting in 2018. Gandhi is considered the founder of naturopathy in India. In 1946, he led a naturopathy campaign in a village called Uruli Kanchan near Pune. That same year, he wrote:

"I believe that where the rules of personal, domestic, and public hygiene are strictly observed, and proper care is taken in matters of diet and exercise, there should be no room for illness or disease. Where there is complete inner and outer purity, disease is impossible. If the village people understand this, they will have no need for doctors, hakims, or vaidyas." (Harijan, May 26, 1946)

National Institute of Naturopathy and Nisarg Gram

The National Institute of Naturopathy (NIN), Pune, was established on December 22, 1986. It is housed in the Nature Cure Centre, which was handed over to the Government of India on March 17, 1975. Its headquarters, 'Bapu Bhavan', is named after Mahatma Gandhi. NIN is an autonomous body under the Ministry of AYUSH, with the Union Minister of AYUSH as its Governing Body. NIN performs the following functions:

To provide facilities for and encourage standardization and dissemination of existing knowledge in the field of naturopathy and yoga; To promote quality training and education in naturopathy and yoga by establishing Nature Cure University; To undertake, facilitate and promote research on all aspects of human health; and To establish a living memorial of Mahatma Gandhi.

NIN runs specialized outpatient department (OPD) clinics for general needs, including a 'Maternal Care OPD' for prenatal and postnatal health; a 'Diabetes OPD' that works through diet, yoga, and lifestyle modifications; and a 'Mind-Body Medicine OPD' that works through yoga, meditation, and relaxation for stress and anxiety.

Nature Village

On February 25, 2024, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the new campus of the National Institute of Naturopathy (NIN), 'Nisarg Gram', in Pune. Spread over 25 acres and built at a cost of 213.55 crore, the campus includes a 250-bed hospital, a research and extension service center, and a naturopathy medical college offering undergraduate, postgraduate, and paramedical courses. This is the country's first National Naturopathy Hospital, where lifestyle-related metabolic disorders can be treated naturopathically.

Nature Village at a Glance

The campus is spread over 25 acres at Yewalewadi, Pune, and was built at a cost of Rs 213.55 crore. It has a 250-bed hospital, the first national naturopathy hospital, and a Naturopathy Medical College with 100 BNYS seats in the year 2026-27. Facilities include a yoga hall, Satvik diet centre, hydrotherapy, magnetotherapy, chromotherapy, massage and physiotherapy.

Reaching out to tribal communities

In collaboration with the Tribal Development Department of the Government of Maharashtra, NIN has established the "Nisarg Arogya Sadhana Kendra" for tribal people in Gohe (Budruk), Ambegaon taluka, Pune district. This is a fully equipped yoga and naturopathy hospital. The unit has 20 beds, separate wards for men and women, a yoga hall, and a diet center. Its objective is to meet the nutritional needs of the community through local resources and provide a self-reliant health care model through naturopathy. The unit also serves as a training center where tribal youth learn the skills of naturopathy and yoga and adopt them for their health. Its "Treatment Assistant Training Course" has a capacity to admit 40 tribal students each year.

Naturopathy emphasizes living in harmony with nature. This resonates with tribal communities; their knowledge and harmony with nature are recognized every year on "Tribal Pride Day," celebrated on November 15, the birth anniversary of Lord Birsa Munda. The government is working in this direction. On January 16, 2026, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), and the Ministry of AYUSH, organized a national capacity-building program for tribal healers in Hyderabad. The objective was to engage these healers as community-level partners in delivering healthcare services to people in tribal areas. The Ministry has set a national target of recognizing one lakh tribal healers. During the 'Tribal Pride Fortnight 2026', a capacity-building conference was organised in Hyderabad on November 1 and 2, bringing together around 1,500 traditional healers from 9 states and union territories for training.

Training a new generation of naturopaths

A growing system needs trained doctors and the government has set a clear direction for them.

BNYS degree

NIN is the first central government institute in the country to offer the Bachelor of Naturopathy and Yogic Sciences (BNYS) program, affiliated with Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya, a central university in New Delhi. A BNYS student stays on campus for five and a half years: four and a half years of academic and clinical training, followed by a one-year compulsory rotatory residential internship. There are 100 seats available at Nisarg Gram for the academic session 2026-27, and classes will commence on November 30, 2026.

As of April 1, 2024, 71 naturopathy undergraduate colleges across the country had an intake capacity of 5,214 students, while 6 postgraduate colleges had an intake capacity of 144 students. As of January 1, 2024, 5,083 naturopathy practitioners were registered with state boards and councils.

Central Registration

The Naturopathy Registration Board (NRB), established by the NIN under the Ministry of AYUSH, conducts central registration of naturopathy practitioners and accredits institutions and hospitals. BNYS graduates from universities recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC) can apply for its central registration certificate.

Self-care courses

NIN also offers short-term skill development courses. Courses in acupressure, naturopathy, and naturopathic cooking are primarily for self-help, enabling people to take care of their own health and that of their families, under the motto of "Self-Health Self-Reliance." Courses in massage, fitness training, and yoga help people become professionally self-reliant.

Evidence-based research and new hospitals

Research provides the scientific basis for naturopathy. Shri Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ministry of AYUSH, said: "Scientific validation is essential to enhance the credibility of naturopathy and its widespread use. Through CCRYN and other institutions, we are promoting systematic research, clinical evaluation, and collaboration so that naturopathy can be evaluated using appropriate scientific methods and adopted as responsible healthcare practices."

Research councils, institutes and hospitals

The Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy (CCRYN), fully funded by the Ministry of AYUSH, has been conducting research, promotion, and development in yoga and naturopathy since 1978. The Council has 22 branches across India. The Ministry's five research councils together published 653 research papers during 2025-26.

India now has 200-bed Yoga and Naturopathy hospitals in Jhajjar, Haryana, and Nagamangala, Karnataka. There are also postgraduate institutes for education and research in Yoga and Naturopathy. The CRIYN in Jhajjar, a premier research and education facility built on 19 acres at a cost of 63.88 crore, was inaugurated by the Prime Minister on February 25, 2024—the same day as the inauguration of 'Nisarg Gram'. In 2024, the Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone for two more CRIYNs in Khorda, Odisha, and Raipur, Chhattisgarh. As of April 1, 2024, naturopathy facilities will be available in 35 hospitals (with a total of 1,663 beds) and 95 dispensaries across the country.

The National Institute of Naturopathy (NIN) also has a dedicated research department and an Institutional Ethics Committee registered with the Department of Health Research. It conducts research methodology workshops, good clinical practice training, observational studies, systematic reviews, and collaborative research. Its current in-house studies focus on topics such as various fasting methods, hip baths and wet sheet packs, the effects of sunlight on type 2 diabetes, an integrated naturopathy and yoga program and its effects on gut microbiota, and naturopathy and yoga for knee osteoarthritis.

Traditional practices of India and the world

The number of patients coming to India from abroad is increasing. The number of foreign patients coming to India for various types of treatment is expected to increase from 1,82,945 in 2020 to 6,44,387 in 2024, with yoga, Ayurveda and wellness-based medical systems contributing significantly. Foreign patients are now increasingly adopting India's traditional medical systems—such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy—for chronic diseases, lifestyle disorders, rehabilitation and wellness programs.

India's wellness tourism focuses on preventive and holistic health through traditional systems such as yoga, Ayurveda, and naturopathy. To facilitate access to such healthcare, the government launched a special AYUSH visa on July 27, 2023, for foreign nationals and their attendants seeking treatment under the AYUSH system. The Prime Minister announced this visa at the Global AYUSH Investment and Innovation Summit held in Gandhinagar in April 2022. It is part of India's roadmap for the Heal in India initiative, which promotes India as a destination for medical value travel. AYUSH centers will be included in the five proposed "Regional Medical Value Tourism Hubs" announced in the February 2026 Union Budget. These centers will offer modern medical treatment along with traditional medical practices, wellness services, and rehabilitation facilities.

Promoting natural medicine

Naturopathy is based on simple methods—good food, rest, physical activity, and the healing power of nature. India has given this system a national institute and the first National Naturopathy Hospital. Furthermore, it has degrees under a central university, research institutes and hospitals, central registration, and 'AYUSH' care in health centers across the country. On the occasion of the 9th National Naturopathy Day on November 18, 2026, in Nagamangala, the vision of 'Naturopathy, Healthy India' will emphasize balanced diet, physical activity, yoga, and healthy living for all age groups.

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

Owner & Editor, Printer, Publisher: **Nasir Azam Khan**, Published From **Srinagar,** Printed at **K.T Press Pvt. Ltd 120-Electronic Complex, Industries Estate, Rangreth**,
RNI NO:-**JKENG-2010/39938**, Email:- **Kashmirthunder123@gmail.com**, Website: **Kashmirthunder.com**, Mobile: **9906797575, 9419006285**
Owner & Editor-In-Chief of Kashmir News Observer (KNO), a leading news agency in Jammu & Kashmir. Website: www.kashmirnewsobserver.com, Mail: info@kashmirnewsobserver.com

COMBATING DRUG ABUSE

Those destroying future of our youth through drug trafficking must face stringent action under law: Sakeena Itoo

Calls for result-oriented, district-level action plan, addresses National Social Justice Summit 'Samaveshi Niti Sankalp' in New Delhi

KT News Desk



JAMMU, NOVEMBER 20: Minister for Health & Medical Education and Social Welfare, Sakeena Itoo, has called for transforming the fight against drug abuse from a largely awareness-driven campaign into a comprehensive, measurable and outcome-oriented national mission, emphasising the need for coordinated action at the district, institutional and individual levels to effectively tackle the growing menace of substance abuse.

The Minister, as per an official statement, said this while addressing the second day of National Social Justice Summit 'Samaveshi Niti Sankalp' at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan here Friday.

While putting forth a practical framework for strengthening the national campaign against drug abuse, the Minister advocated an integrated model based on the principles of "One District, One Action Plan; One School, One Prevention Programme; One Patient, One Recovery Plan; and One Year of Follow-up".

She stressed that the proposed framework could be adopted by every district across the country to ensure effective prevention, early identification, timely medical intervention, sustained rehabilitation and long-term recovery of individuals affected by substance abuse.

Elaborating on the proposed approach, Sakeena Itoo said that every district must formulate a dedicated action plan after identifying vulnerable areas and high-risk groups, with close coordination among the Health, Education and Police Departments to ensure timely intervention and effective implementation of preventive measures.

She further emphasised that schools and colleges must emerge as important centres of prevention, with trained nodal teachers entrusted with the responsibility of educating students about the harmful consequences of drug abuse, identifying early warning signs and facilitating confidential counselling and professional support wherever required.

Highlighting the need to place individuals at the centre of the rehabilitation process, the Minister said that every person struggling with addiction must be provided an individualised recovery plan rather than limiting the intervention to admission in a de-addiction facility.

"Sending an individual to a de-addiction centre cannot be considered the end of our responsibility. Recovery is a continuous process which requires medical treatment, psychological counselling, family support, vocational training and opportunities for meaningful employment. We must ensure that every person who seeks help gets a genuine opportunity to rebuild his or her life," she said.

Citing the example of a young person identified with substance abuse in Kulgam, the Minister said the intervention must extend beyond medical treatment to include family involvement, counselling, skill development and livelihood support, enabling the individual to reintegrate into society with dignity and confidence.

She also underscored the importance of a structured one-year post-treatment follow-up mechanism, under which a designated counsellor or health worker would maintain regular contact with the recovered individual to monitor progress, provide emotional support and minimise the chances of relapse.

"Treatment must not end with discharge from a facility. The real test of our efforts lies in ensuring that the individual remains connected to the support system, regains confidence and does not return to substance abuse. A structured follow-up mechanism is essential to make recovery sustainable," she maintained.

Calling for a strong enforcement mechanism alongside preventive and rehabilitative interventions, the Minister said drug trafficking networks must be dismantled through coordinated, intelligence-led action by law enforcement agencies, with strict measures against those involved in drug peddling and distribution.

She emphasised that the approach towards the drug menace must be guided by compassion for victims, sensitivity towards affected families and zero tolerance towards drug traffickers and peddlers.

"Our approach must be compassionate towards the victim, supportive of the family and uncompromising towards the drug peddler. Addiction should be addressed as a serious health and social challenge, while those destroying the future of our youth through drug trafficking must face stringent action under law," she said.

The Minister stressed that the success of the national campaign against drugs should be assessed through tangible outcomes rather than being confined to the number of awareness rallies, seminars and other outreach activities organised.

"We must move beyond counting awareness programmes and start measuring the lives recovered, families restored and young people brought back into productive society. Every successful recovery is a victory for an individual, a family and the entire community," she observed.

Reaffirming Jammu and Kashmir's commitment to the national campaign, Sakeena Itoo said that every district must be made accountable for its action plan, every educational institution should become a centre of prevention and every recovered individual should be supported as a symbol of hope and successful rehabilitation.

She expressed confidence that a coordinated, people-centric and sustained approach, involving government departments, educational institutions, healthcare professionals, families and civil society, would significantly strengthen the collective resolve to eliminate the drug menace.

"Let us make Nasha Mukt Bharat not merely a government campaign but a people's movement and a sustained national mission. Our ultimate objective must be to save lives, protect the future of our youth and restore hope in every family affected by this menace," the Minister said.

The Minister also spoke on Disability and Scholarship related themes at the Summit.

On the inaugural day of the summit, Minister Sakeena Itoo highlighted the geographical, infrastructural and administrative challenges faced by students residing in remote and far-flung areas of Jammu and Kashmir

The summit, held on November 18 and 19, was organised to strengthen Centre-State coordination and cooperation for effective implementation of social justice and empowerment initiatives in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047.

During the thematic session on 'One Nation, One Scholarship Portal – Accessible Scholarships, Empowered Students', the Minister drew attention to the difficulties confronting students in remote and hilly areas of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly Basholi, Kishtwar, Reasi, Doda, Tanghdhar, Machil, Keran, Gurez, Uri and other areas where limited digital connectivity and challenging geographical conditions often impede access to various educational and welfare schemes.

Informing the summit about the initiatives being undertaken by Jammu and Kashmir, Sakeena Itoo highlighted that the Social Welfare Department in Jammu and Kashmir would issue a comprehensive verification calendar well in advance of 2027 to streamline the verification process, facilitate timely processing of applications and ensure the efficient delivery of benefits to eligible beneficiaries.

Govt accords Rs 9.85 crore approval for Street Food Hubs at Tangmarg, Lakhanpur



KT News Desk

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 20: In a significant initiative to strengthen local livelihoods, promote tourism and improve public amenities, the Jammu and Kashmir Government, led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, has accorded administrative approval for the construction of two Street Food Hubs at Tangmarg and Lakhanpur at a combined cost of 9.85 crore.

The projects, as per an official statement, assume special significance in view of the strategic and tourism importance of the two locations. Lakhanpur, the gateway to Jammu and Kashmir and J&K's first town for visitors entering from Punjab, serves as the first point of entry for a large number of tourists, pilgrims and travellers. Similarly, Tangmarg is the first major tourist destination on the route to the world-famous ski resort of Gulmarg, welcoming visitors heading towards the popular tourist resort.

The projects include construction of a Street Food Hub at Tangmarg at an approved cost of 3.81 crore and a Clean Street Food Hub at Lakhanpur, near the State Tax Office Building and the bus stand, at a cost of 6.04 crore. The funding will be provided under PM SVANidhi and the Capex Budget (MRDA Sector).

The initiative aims to provide organised, hygienic and well-equipped spaces for street vendors, improve public amenities and ensure access to safe and quality food for residents, tourists and other visitors.

The development of these facilities is expected to enhance the overall visitor experience at two important entry and tourism points of Jammu and Kashmir, while providing better livelihood opportunities to street vendors and giving a boost to local economic activity.

The projects reflect Chief Minister Omar Abdullah-led Government's focus on creating cleaner, better-organised and more visitor-friendly public spaces, reinforcing the importance of Lakhanpur and Tangmarg in the J&K's tourism and economic landscape.

JKSSB reaffirms integrity of Accounts Assistant Examination

Appreciates swift action by J&K Police

KT News Desk

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 20: The Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) clarifies that the Accounts Assistant examination conducted on November 15, 2026, was successfully held across all 20 districts of the Union Territory and that the isolated incident involving an attempt to use unfair means did not compromise the examination process.

The Examination was spread over 493 Examination Centres in which 1,61,946 candidates were scheduled to appear for selection against 600 posts.

The Board, as per an official statement, appreciated J&K Police for their swift, professional and decisive action in identifying and apprehending the elements allegedly involved in the nefarious attempt to undermine the sanctity of the examination. The Board acknowledged the integral role of J&K Police as a key component of the overall examination management and security apparatus, working in close coordination with JKSSB, District Administrations and other stakeholder agencies to ensure the secure and orderly conduct of examinations. The timely intervention of the Police, complemented by the multi-layered security arrangements put in place by the Government, ensured that the suspected elements could not compromise the examination process.

The Board recognized that every recruitment examination represents years of preparation, aspiration and hard work on the part of candidates. The protection of their interests and preservation of a level playing field is an administrative responsibility as well as an institutional obligation. Every candidate must have the assurance that selection is determined solely by merit and prescribed eligibility and selection criteria, without any unfair advantage or extraneous consideration. JKSSB remains firmly committed to safeguarding the interests of genuine candidates and ensuring equal opportunity to all eligible aspirants.

JKSSB has put in place a comprehensive, multi-layered examination-security framework encompassing technological surveillance, identity authentication, access control and administrative supervision. CCTV surveillance and electronic jammers are complemented by biometric authentication of candidates, physical verification at entry points, surprise inspections through flying squads, and strict protocols governing the transportation, handling and custody of examination material. These preventive and monitoring mechanisms are aimed at deterring impersonation, unauthorized communication, use of prohibited electronic devices and other forms of examination malpractice. Strict adherence to prescribed Standard Operating Procedures is ensured through clearly defined responsibilities of all personnel deployed for examination-related duties.

The Board has taken cognisance of the 'Latest Modus Operandi' attempted to be used in the thwarted attempt by the unscrupulous elements. The Board has added additional preventive measures for the upcoming exams to the already existing gamut of preventive measures. These additional measures have been taken in view of the evolving modus operandi of the unscrupulous elements and to ensure that the upcoming examinations continue to be conducted in a fair and transparent manner while thwarting any new designs of the unscrupulous elements to use any kind of unfair means in future examinations. These include updating the existing comprehensive SOPs, stricter access controls and security of examination centres/halls and increasing technical surveillance and barriers against the use of technical gadgets as unfair means.

JKSSB reiterates that the sanctity of the examination process and the interests of genuine candidates shall remain paramount. Every selection shall be governed by merit and notified criteria, and any established attempt to undermine the integrity of the recruitment process shall be dealt with strictly in accordance with law.

Transport Department conducts enforcement drive in Thathri–Gandoh



KT News Desk

DODA, NOVEMBER 20: In a major road safety enforcement initiative, the Transport Department conducted an intensive vehicle-checking drive in the Thathri–Gandoh area of district Doda, acting on the directions of the Transport Commissioner J&K and under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner Doda.

A team comprising the Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO) Doda and Motor Vehicle Inspectors carried out thorough inspections of vehicles to ensure strict compliance with the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act. Special focus was laid on overloading, vehicle fitness and other traffic-related violations.

During the drive, the enforcement team issued 32 challans and imposed fines amounting to Rs. 1,15,000. Additionally, four driving licences were recommended for suspension, while two vehicles operating without valid fitness certificates were seized.

The ARTO stated that such enforcement drives are part of the department's sustained efforts to curb traffic violations, strengthen road safety measures and prevent road accidents. He further informed that similar checking drives would continue across the district to ensure strict adherence to traffic regulations.

The general public, particularly transport operators and drivers, have been urged to strictly follow traffic rules, avoid overloading, ensure valid vehicle fitness certificates and cooperate with the authorities in making roads safer for all.

Surakshit Bachpan Abhiyan

DLSA Budgam organises awareness programme on Child Rights, Protection

KT News Desk



BUDGAM, NOVEMBER 20: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Budgam, in collaboration with the Education Department, Budgam, Friday organised an awareness programme on Child Rights and Protection, with special emphasis on the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 at Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Budgam, under the banner of "Surakshit Bachpan Abhiyan."

The programme, as per an official statement, was the second programme of the series of programmes being held by DLSA under the campaign.

The programme, as per an official statement, was organised under the directions of Chairman DLSA O.P Bhagat and under the guidance of Secretary, DLSA Budgam, Tabasum Qadir Parray, with the objective of sensitising students and the teaching fraternity about child rights, child protection mechanisms, and the legal safeguards available to children under the POCSO Act, 2012.

During the programme, Advocate Zahoor Ahmad Malik, Panel Lawyer Advocate Feroz Ahmad Khan and Advocate Showkat Ahmad, Resource Persons, deliberated on various aspects of child rights and POCSO Act,2012 . They highlighted the key provisions of the POCSO Act, 2012, recognising and reporting Child Sexual and abuse, importance of preventing child abuse and exploitation, legal remedies available to victims, and the role of educational institutions, teachers and society in ensuring a safe and protective environment for children.

The students were also sensitised about the importance of recognising, reporting and responding appropriately to instances of abuse. The programme witnessed the participation of teachers, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) and a large number of students, who actively attended the awareness session.

The initiative reaffirmed the commitment of DLSA Budgam towards promoting legal awareness, safeguarding the rights and dignity of children, and strengthening community participation in creating a safe, secure and child-friendly environment.

WORLD HERITAGE WEEK CELEBRATIONS

Experts deliberate on tangible Cultural Heritage of J&K on day-2

KT News Desk

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 20: As part of the week-long celebrations of World Heritage Week 2026, the Department of Archives, Archaeology and Museums, J&K organised an insightful series of lectures on the theme Tangible Cultural Heritage of Jammu and Kashmir" on the second day of the celebrations at Kala Kendra Bikram Chowk, Jammu.

The programme witnessed the participation of eminent experts, scholars and heritage enthusiasts who shared their valuable insights on the rich and diverse tangible cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir, highlighting its historical significance, architectural legacy, artistic traditions and the urgent need for its preservation and promotion.

The distinguished speakers, as per an official statement, included Dr. Shruti Awasthi, Director, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (1GNCA); Arvind Kotwal, JKAS (Retd.), Coordinator, Jammu Tourism, INTACH Jammu Chapter and Prof. Ajay Khjuria, Professor of Practice, MIET Jammu. Through their scholarly presentations and perspectives, the speakers elaborated on various dimensions of the region's cultural heritage and emphasised the importance of documenting, conserving and transmitting this invaluable legacy to future generations.

The lectures provided an enriching platform for intellectual exchange and sensitised the participants towards the importance of heritage conservation, community participation and the role of institutions in safeguarding the cultural identity of Jammu and Kashmir. The speakers also highlighted that tangible heritage, including historic monuments, architectural structures, archaeological remains, traditional art forms and material culture, represents an inseparable link between the past and the present.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director, Archives, Archaeology and Museums, J&K Dr. Pranjal J. Hazarika emphasised that Jammu and Kashmir possesses an exceptionally rich and diverse cultural heritage, which is not merely a reflection of its glorious past but also an important foundation of its cultural identity and collective memory. He observed that the preservation of heritage requires sustained institutional efforts, public awareness and active participation of all stakeholders.

He further stated that the Department is committed to the systematic documentation, conservation, restoration and promotion of the region's tangible and intangible heritage. Such academic engagements and public outreach programmes provide an important opportunity to connect the younger generation with their historical roots and inspire them to take an active role in protecting the invaluable cultural legacy of Jammu and Kashmir.

The programme formed an important part of the Department's week-long celebrations of World Heritage Week, being observed from November 19 to 25, 2026, with a series of exhibitions, heritage walks, lectures, awareness activities, site visits and cultural programmes aimed at promoting heritage consciousness among students, scholars and the general public.

The Department reiterated its commitment to preserving the rich historical, archaeological and artistic heritage of Jammu and Kashmir for posterity.

Kashmir Thunder

Cultural connections strongest guarantee for global peace: PM Modi at SCO forum in Delhi

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday emphasised the significance of holding a dialogue on civilisational connections in India at a time when global discussions are "dominated by war and unrest", asserting that cultural connections serve as the "strongest guarantee" for world peace.

In his address after inaugurating the first SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum being hosted at the historic Purana Quila in Delhi, he also noted that cultural and civilisational cooperation among member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) can further strengthen these ties.

"Empires have certainly changed the maps of the world, but civilisational dialogues have changed the ideas of the world and enriched them," he said at the forum, attended by delegates from various SCO member countries, including Pakistan minister Musadik Malik.

A mega cultural programme themed on 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakum' (world is one family) was showcased to the delegates, depicting the civilisational linkages of India with other countries, before addresses by Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and PM Modi.

The prime minister said there is much discussion in the world about international collaboration and people-to-people connections, and this is an approach that the ancestors nurtured for centuries.

He said around 5,000 years ago, there were trade relations between the Indus Valley Civilisation and Mesopotamia, while later, other trade routes expanded that network of connections.

"India, China, Central Asia and many regions of Eurasia were connected through these ancient trade networks. Scholars and Buddhist monks travelled these routes alongside traders. These journeys led to



an exchange of ideas, languages and traditions," he said.

The PM asserted that "our shared civilisational experiences will play an important role in uniting the world".

Modi said the SCO civilisational summit is "not merely a ceremonial platform" but can become a forum for giving direction to the world.

"At a time when discussions about war and unrest dominate the world, we in India are engaging in initiatives on civilisational dialogue and connectivity. This is also important because cultural connections are the strongest guarantee of global peace. This makes this event all the more significant," he said.

Prior to the inauguration ceremony, Modi visited the exhibition, the 'Mahabharat Scroll Pavilion -- Anant: A Rare 18th Century Mahabharata Scroll', which showcased an illustrated scroll reflecting India's rich epic and artistic traditions.

A senior official told PTI that some of the oldest cells which are part of the fortress ruins, have been decked up for the occasion and "opened for the very first time for public display".

Modi also visited the exhibition, titled 'Astitva -- The Essence of our Existence', which offers an immersive account of Delhi's history through archaeological evidence dating from 1,200 BC to 1200 CE, including excavated remains, artefacts, architectural fragments and other significant discoveries.

Reflecting on the historic setting of Purana Qila, a centrally protected site whose history scholars trace back thousands of years to the Mahabharata era, the prime minister described it as an "extraordinary heritage".

He said the historic fort is as captivating as the fascinating tales associated with it.

According to scholars, he said, the history of this fort dates back thousands of years to the Mahabharata era.

"At such an ancient site, there were magnificent cultural performances, the powerful chanting of Vedic mantras, presentations on Buddhist philosophy and a journey of Lord Hanuman... These offered glimpses of India's culture and also conveyed a message of love and unity for humanity.

"These emotions, these ideas, these teachings are as universal as they are ancient. Beyond geopolitical boundaries, they naturally connect us with one another. This is the purpose of this summit, and it is also what the times demand," he said.

Modi said 21st-century technology has created new possibilities for cultural connectivity around the world, and the places where the ancestors once had to travel for months, people in those same countries can now connect with one another in just a few seconds.

The PM said museums, libraries and archives in the nations safeguard a priceless heritage spanning thousands of years. Ancient manuscripts, rare texts, historical documents and artworks reveal many facets of the interconnectedness, he added.

"Today, technology offers tremendous opportunities to bring this heritage to the next generation," he said.

The prime minister said a couple of months ago, the SCO marked its 25th anniversary and over the years, it has expanded cooperation in security, economy and connectivity.

"Cultural and civilisational cooperation among member countries can further strengthen these ties. I am confident that this forum will encourage new ideas and create fresh opportunities for cultural cooperation.

"Our shared civilisational experiences can also play an important role in bringing the world closer together," he said.

The three-day event is being hosted by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of External Affairs from November 20-22.

The SCO was founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001 by the presidents of Russia, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

India and Pakistan became its permanent members in 2017. Iran became a member in 2023.

The three-day forum will bring together scholars, academics, experts and cultural representatives to explore the "shared civilisational heritage of SCO countries".

The initiative builds upon the proposal made by PM Modi at the SCO Summit in Tianjin, China, in 2025 to establish a dedicated platform for civilisational dialogue under the SCO framework.

The proposal was subsequently welcomed in the Bishkek Declaration of the SCO.

EoDB reforms must benefit businesses, protect consumers: Bhagat



KT News Desk

JAMMU, NOVEMBER 20: Commissioner Secretary, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department, Saurabh Bhagat, today held a comprehensive interactive session with the officers of the Legal Metrology Department at the Legal Metrology Complex, focusing on implementation of Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) measures and de-regulation reforms.

During the interaction, Controller, Legal Metrology, J&K, Shiv Kumar Gupta, briefed the Commissioner Secretary on the Department's ongoing initiatives, enforcement drives, information and awareness activities, and institutional reforms being undertaken across the Union Territory.

The Commissioner Secretary was apprised of the major regulatory changes introduced under the EoDB framework, particularly replacement of the earlier licensing regime with a simplified registration-based system for manufacturers, repairers and dealers of weights and measures. It was informed that Registration Certificates now carry lifetime validity, eliminating periodic renewals and recurring compliance requirements. The requirement of mandatory pre-registration physical inspection has also been dispensed with in favour of self-declaration.

The introduction of the Improvement Notice Mechanism under the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026, was also highlighted. Under this mechanism, first-time specified contraventions are addressed through corrective Improvement Notices, providing an opportunity to rectify deficiencies before initiating penal action.

Other important reforms discussed included rationalisation of minor offences, extended re-verification cycles for specified weighing and measuring instruments, and simplification of compliance procedures.

The Commissioner Secretary was also apprised of the transition towards end-to-end digital service delivery through the J&K Single Window System, covering registration, verification and re-verification services. The expansion of the Government Approved Test Centre (GATC) mechanism, enabling authorised third-party laboratories to verify specified weighing and measuring instruments, was also discussed. The Department also undertook a number of awareness camps across the Union Territory to sensitise stakeholders about the latest reforms relating to Ease of Doing Business.

Interacting with the officers, Saurabh Bhagat emphasised effective implementation of the reforms, adoption of technology-driven solutions and strengthening of transparency and accountability in departmental functioning. He stressed that the reforms should translate into tangible benefits for businesses while ensuring effective consumer protection.

The session also provided an opportunity for officers to share field-level experiences, discuss operational challenges and offer suggestions for further improving service delivery and enforcement mechanisms.

Examining data to ascertain if Indian insurgent groups benefited from Van Dyke's training: NIA

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: National Investigation Agency (NIA) chief Rakesh Aggrawal on Friday said investigators are sifting through data to ascertain whether any Indian insurgent group benefited from the alleged militant training imparted by US national Matthew Aaron Van Dyke.

Van Dyke and six Ukraine nationals were arrested by the NIA earlier this year on charges of illegally crossing over to Myanmar from India to train ethnic armed groups. The US national is currently out on default bail.

"The investigation so far has revealed that they came to India on valid visas and crossed over to Myanmar through illegal routes. They returned to India via the same routes before being arrested. So, this part of the investigation is complete, and for this, they have already been charged," Aggrawal said at a press conference here.

The second part of the investigation involves identifying the Indian insurgents who were



trained by them, he said.

"Unless we are able to establish the identity of the persons who were trained by them, it will not be possible to chargesheet them under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)," Aggrawal said while briefing mediapersons on the conclusion of a two-day anti-insurgency conference.

"We have lots of data, and we are sifting through it to establish whether any Indian insurgent group benefited from their training. If we are able to establish that, we will chargesheet them," Aggrawal said.

To a question on Van Dyke's reported claim that he was assaulted, the NIA chief said the US national had not made any allegations against the NIA.

"I am sure they would have been inquired into. During the course of the investigation, he was produced before court about six or seven times. During the hearings, he did not make any such allegation before the judge," Aggrawal said.

Van Dyke, on the other hand, recently claimed that India imprisoned him and six others for more than six months as "part of" Russia's offensive against Ukraine, vowing to reveal "shocking details" about the case in coming months.

"India threw me and several Ukrainians in prison for over six months. This was part of Russia's war against Ukraine. I will reveal shocking details about this story over the next few months, in both posts and media interviews," he said in a post on X.

A Delhi court last month extended till February 24, 2026, the permission granted to Van Dyke and six Ukraine nationals to remain outside India.

The NIA has alleged that Van Dyke and the six Ukraine nationals entered India on tourist visas, travelled to the north-eastern region without mandatory permits and subsequently crossed into Myanmar, where they allegedly trained ethnic armed groups.

The agency had initially invoked provisions of the UAPA, including those relating to conspiracy.

It had also alleged that the accused were involved in assembling equipment and targeting a passenger aircraft in Myanmar.

First high-speed rail service will commence in last quarter of 2027: Vaishnaw on bullet train

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Friday said the country's first high-speed rail service will commence in the last quarter of 2027 and the first section to open will be from Surat to Vapi.

The full corridor to Mumbai will follow in phases, he added in a post on Substack.

Talking about the pace of construction, he said that as of September, 456 km of pier work and 371 km of viaduct construction have been completed.

Six lakh noise barriers have been installed along 299 km stretch and 9,300 OHE masts have been installed across a 206 km viaduct, Vaishnaw wrote.

Additionally, he emphasised that four mountain tunnels have been excavated and 5 km of the 21 km Maharashtra tunnel has been excavated using the mountain tunnelling method.

He stated that civil work has been completed at eight stations, and architectural finishing work is underway.

Work is in progress at all three rolling stock depots at Sabarmati, Surat and Thane, Vaishnaw said.

Talking about the construction of the undersea tunnel, he said that in Maharashtra, the corridor runs through a 21 km tunnel, and 7 km of it passes under the sea, beneath Thane Creek.

This is India's first undersea rail tunnel.

"Two Tunnel Boring Machines were launched in July 2026, from Vikhroli and Sawli. These are among the largest machines ever deployed in India," Vaishnaw said.

He added, "Each has a cutterhead 13.6 metres in diameter, as tall as a 4-storey building. Each weigh over 3,000 tonnes, roughly 500 Asian elephants. The machine is 96 metres long, nearly five cricket pitches laid end to end!"

He highlighted the ongoing manufacturing of India's first bullet trains and said, "ICF and BEML are manufacturing the indigenous B28 trainset, designed for 280 kmph. The first body frame is complete and is undergoing structural testing. Track trials are expected by mid-2027. A faster B35, designed for 350 kmph, is the next step."

"The fixed infrastructure is being indigenised too. All major transformers of the high-speed electrification system, the cross arms on the masts, the ground, protection and feeder wires: all are being manufactured in India," he stated.

Talking about the delay of almost a decade since it was first announced in 2017, Vaishnaw said that the project could not start in Maharashtra for close to two and a half years because state permissions and land acquisition were pending.

"Then COVID took away two more years. Full construction began in earnest in 2021," he said.

"So, when critics ask, 'where is the bullet train', the honest answer is: serious construction is just five years old. And look at what five years have built," he added.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Tear down entire

Secretary Dr. Sajjan Singh Yadav; DGP Nalin Prabhat; Additional Chief Secretary Home Department Chandraker Bharti; Special DG Coordination PHQ S.J.M. Gillani; Commissioner Secretary GAD M. Raju; Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor Govind Jaiswal; IGP Jammu Terjinder Singh; Divisional Commissioner Jammu Vikas Kundal; Range DIGs, DCs, SSPs, and other senior officers. (KNO)

Terror, organised

strengthen ATS units on the prescribed model and establish specialised cyber cells to counter the growing use of technology by terrorist organisations.

He also advocated structural and operational uniformity under PRAHAAR, the national counter-terrorism framework, to improve coordination among agencies.

Reiterating the government's stand on fugitives operating from abroad, Shah said every fugitive involved in terrorism, organised crime or narcotics offences would be brought back to face trial. He noted that 303 fugitives had been returned to India from 36 countries since 2019.

The conference deliberated on issues such as the organised crime-terror nexus, online radicalisation, cross-border smuggling of arms and narcotics, hawala transactions, trade-based money laundering, drone threats and the use of digital platforms by terrorist networks.

Discussions also focused on artificial intelligence, big data analytics, digital forensics, prosecution of terror cases, witness protection and legal provisions under anti-terror laws.

Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, in his concluding remarks, stressed the need to translate the PRAHAAR framework into coordinated action at the state, district and police station levels and called for stronger forensic and financial investigation capabilities.

During the conference, Shah released the NIA publication Fail-Safe Investigation, launched the agency's Pushti portal to help citizens verify fraudulent notices issued in the NIA's name, laid the foundation stone for the NIA office complex in Chandigarh and inaugurated its residential complex at Maidangarhi in Delhi. (KNO)

Jhelum, tributaries

at Batkoot recorded minus 0.66 metres against 1.5 metres, Doodhganga Nallah at Barzulla stood at 0.26 metres against 3.65 metres, and Sindh Nallah at Doderhama was measured at minus 0.40 metres against a reference level of 3.65 metres.

The data indicates that water levels across the Jhelum and its tributaries continue to remain substantially below their respective reference marks. (KNO)

Mercury rises

November 30, while temperatures could witness a further decline in the coming days.

The slight improvement in minimum temperatures comes amid the onset of winter conditions across the Valley, with several higher-altitude areas continuing to record sub-zero temperatures. (KNO)

J&K unveils SOP

agency, bearing the date, designation and official seal. The handover must also form part of the inventory maintained in the Roznamcha Waqiati.

The SOP mandates quarterly follow-ups by the concerned Deputy Commissioner or RDSLR to ensure the timely return of records. Progress reports are to be submitted to the office of the Financial Commissioner every quarter.

The directions further stipulate that original records must be sought back from the investigating agency within three months of their handover, unless an extension is specifically justified and recorded in writing by the agency concerned.

Upon return, the records are to be examined and verified against the authenticated scanned copies. Any discrepancy detected during verification must be immediately reported to the Financial Commissioner's office.

The government has also directed all Deputy Commissioners and Regional Directors, Survey and Land Records, to submit an annual inventory by December 31 detailing all original revenue records lying with investigating agencies or any person or office other than the lawful custodian, as prescribed under the rules. (KNO)

BJP hits back at Rahul over 'compromised PM' jibe, calls him 'clueless on geopolitics'

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: The BJP slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday over his swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi following a Trump-Xi-Putin trilateral meeting, calling him "clueless on geopolitics" and accusing him of pushing "pro-Pakistan propaganda".

The ruling party also mocked Gandhi's remarks by sharing an AI-generated image showing the Congress leader serving drinks to US President Donald Trump at the trilateral meeting involving Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Sharing the image on X, Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia took a dig at Gandhi with the caption, "Kuch aise (Something like this)", accompanied by laughing and fire emojis.



Talking to reporters here, Union Parliamentary Affairs minister Kiren Rijiju said Gandhi should not make statements against India whether inside the country or abroad.

In response to Gandhi's social media post on the Trump-Xi-Putin meeting, BJP's national media convenor Ashish Usha Agarwal said a trilateral meeting of the United States, China and Russia does not define India's global standing, pointing to New Delhi's engagement with competing powers through platforms, such as BRICS, Quad, SCO, G20 and G7.

Gandhi had shared a picture from the rare three-way talks of Trump, Xi and Putin, and said, "A compromised PM can never sit at this table."

"If Congress were in power, India's Prime Minister would be sitting at this table. A compromised PM can never sit at this table," the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha had said on X.

In a post on the platform, Agarwal said India joined the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 2016, the Wassenaar Arrangement in 2017, the Australia Group in 2018 and became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2017.

He also questioned why Congress leader Sonia Gandhi was engaging with foreign heads of state while Manmohan Singh was the prime minister and asked what her official mandate was.

"India's global standing is built on strategic autonomy, national interest and institutional strength -- not dynastic privilege or photo opportunities," Agarwal said.

"Rahul Gandhi should stop confusing a photograph with foreign policy. Congress must answer for its own record before lecturing India," he added.

BJP's social media national convenor Deepak Mhaskey said, "Not every international grouping revolves around India, Rahul Gandhi! A little understanding of diplomacy would help."

"Established in November 1989, when Rajiv Gandhi (your father, Rahul) was India's Prime Minister, APEC is a forum for economies bordering the Pacific. India, despite its vast coastline along the Indian Ocean, DOES NOT border the Pacific. So, questioning its absence from APEC makes NO SENSE," he said in a post on X.

"Every grouping has its own purpose, membership and strategic priorities. That is how international diplomacy works," Mhaskey said.

BJP leader C R Kesavan claimed that Gandhi is "utterly clueless" about global geopolitics and accused him of being a "leader of pro-Pakistan propaganda".

No FAST-DS declaration needed for foreign bank a/c up to Rs 20 lakh with disclosed funds: I-T dept

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: The Income Tax Department on Friday said individuals holding foreign bank accounts with an aggregate balance of up to Rs 20 lakh at any time during the previous year will not have to file declaration under the Foreign Assets of Small Taxpayers Disclosure Scheme (FAST-DS), if the funds in such accounts are from disclosed sources.

In a supplementary FAQ on the scheme, the I-T department said the exemption applies to cases where the foreign bank account has not been reported in Schedule FA of the income tax return but the deposits are otherwise accounted for and sourced from disclosed income.

Under the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015, assessees with one or more foreign bank accounts and an aggregate balance of up to Rs 20 lakh at any time during the previous year are exempt from Rs 10 lakh penalty for non-disclosure in Schedule FA of the Income Tax Return (ITR). Such accounts are also exempt from prosecution under Sections 49 and 50 of the Act, it said.

However, the I-T department cautioned that the relaxation does not cover foreign bank accounts containing undisclosed income or unaccounted deposits.

"A declaration will be required where the account contains undisclosed income or unaccounted deposits as they are subject to tax and penalty under the BMA," the FAQ stated.

The FAQ would provide relief to taxpayers holding low-value overseas bank accounts where the source of funds is duly explained, while making it clear that the small-account threshold cannot be used to shield undisclosed foreign income or unaccounted deposits.

'Air India board holds meeting; discusses operational matters, fuel cost challenges'

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: The board of directors of loss-making Air India discussed various operational and financial matters, including issues related to rising fuel costs, during its meeting on Friday, according to sources.

The Tata Group-owned airline that has embarked on an ambitious transformation plan is working on ways to rationalise costs amid significant headwinds, including due to high fuel costs and airspace curbs.

Possible synergies between Air India and Air India Express by way of integration of key operations as well as ways to ensure cost effectiveness were discussed at the meeting, the sources said.

They said issues arising out of high fuel costs and ways to tackle the situation, and cost rationalisation, were also believed to have been discussed.

The meeting of the board, chaired by N Chandrasekaran, was held at Air India's headquarters in Gurugram.

Apart from Chandrasekaran, and CEO and MD Tewolde Gebremariam, there are five members on the board of Air India. They are three independent directors -- Sanjiv Mehta, Alice G Vaidyan and P R Ramesh -- and two non-executive non-independent directors -- P B Balaji and Goh Choon Phong.

The airline is co-owned by Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines. Goh Choon Phong is the CEO of Singapore Airlines.

Gebremariam, who formally took charge on October 1, is focused on ways to reduce expenses and the airline has also set up a multi-disciplinary team to identify cost-saving opportunities.

On Thursday, Tata Sons board members, including Chandrasekaran and Noel Tata, reviewed the performance of Air India.

Gebremariam had also made a presentation on the airline's performance and plans to the board members.

Surging fuel prices, Pakistan airspace restrictions disrupting long-haul flight operations, and other headwinds widened Air India's loss to more than Rs 22,000 crore in FY26.

The airline, acquired by the Tatas from the government in January 2022, is also facing supply chain challenges impacting its fleet upgradation plans and delaying aircraft deliveries.

Earlier this month, Singapore Airlines said Air India has made tangible progress in its multi-year transformation, including enhancements to customer experience and operational performance.

"SIA and its partner, Tata Sons, recognise that a transformation of this scale will take time.

"Both partners continue to work closely to support Air India's journey towards profitable growth, including strengthening structural cost efficiencies, unlocking greater synergies between Air India and Air India Express, sharpening its commercial strategy to navigate current external challenges and elevating its customer proposition," Singapore Airlines had said.

Congress questions Pak minister's visit for SCO event

'Rubbing salt into wounds of Pahalgam victims' families'



PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinate on Friday questioned the Modi government over Pakistan Minister Musadik Malik being invited to India for the SCO Civilisational Dialogue, saying the move of "rolling out the red carpet" for him was like "rubbing salt into the wounds" of the families of those killed in the Pahalgam attack.

Pakistan's Climate Change Minister Dr Musadik Malik, who arrived here on Friday, would share the country's perspective on inter-civilisational dialogue.

Hitting out at the Modi government, Shrinate said the Modi government is organising the SCO Civilisational Dialogue in India on Saturday and Sunday and the question is why Pakistan was invited to this event.

"Why have you invited Pakistan, a country that sponsors terrorism in India? You invited Pakistan, and its minister, Musadik Malik, has arrived here," Shrinate told PTI Videos.

She said he is grinning and enjoying the welcome being accorded to him. This is the same person who had openly threatened just a few months ago to chop off the hands of Indians and shed our blood, she added.

"The question is that Pakistan has not stopped sponsoring terrorism, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is busy welcoming its representatives. Musadik Malik be served biryani, kebabs and kheer?" Shrinate said.

The Congress leader alleged that the government is rolling out the red carpet to welcome Malik.

"Why does your work not get done without an anti-India Pakistan?" she said, hitting out at Pakistan.

"The point is that you should also say and do what Rahul Gandhi has stated unequivocally: as long as Pakistan continues to sponsor terrorism, no dialogue with it is possible," she said.

Shrinate accused the Modi government of changing stance.

"Sometimes you travel there, sometimes you reach Lahore, at other times you abruptly call off Operation Sindoor, and now you invite them here. What exactly is Prime Minister Modi doing?

"The funeral pyres of those martyred in the Pahalgam massacre have not even cooled yet, and you are rubbing salt into the wounds of their families," Shrinate said.

Engaging parents, equitable access among recommendations in handbook on RTE inclusion in classrooms

PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20: Engaging parents and the community, and providing equitable access paired with clear pathways to higher education are among the recommendations made in a new handbook, "Inclusion in Action: Lessons from Right to Education (RTE) Implementation".

The handbook, prepared by Indus Action, a non-profit organisation focused on social protection, civic tech and welfare access, draws on the experiences of students, parents, teachers and school leaders gathered through classroom observations, interviews and focus group discussions from across nine private schools in Delhi.

A research team of four members observed and listened to students' experiences in school, including the challenges they face, how they cope, their social networks and what they value about their school.

The team also focused on the practices schools and teachers adopted, whether intentional or emergent, to address students' inclusion-related challenges.

The study, conducted from March to June 2026, found



that several students struggle to meet grade-level expectations, falling further behind as curriculum demands increase.

Gaps in teacher pedagogy, beliefs and preparedness, limited parental involvement, peer segregation and exclusion and cost constraints keeping RTE students from school trips, sports, competitions, and summer camps, leaving them feeling excluded, are among the challenges found during the study.

The handbook was launched this week by Delhi Education Minister Ashish Sood.

"Enrolment does not, by itself, ensure that students experience meaningful inclusion. What happens after a child enters the classroom matters just as much as how a school responds to differences in students' backgrounds, learning needs, and experiences shapes whether they feel supported, can participate in school life, and progress in their learning," he said.

Tarun Cherukuri, founder and CEO of Indus Action, highlighted the systemic shift required to move past mere legal compliance. "For over a decade, we have focused heavily on opening the school gates for vulnerable families, but a seat without structural belonging is a promise half-kept. This study moves the conversation from classroom integration to deep, empathetic inclusion.

"By addressing hidden costs, transforming teacher pedagogy and eliminating peer segregation, we can co-create learning spaces where every RTE student thrives with dignity and strives for their highest potential," he said.

Bengal prepared to deal with possible impact of Cyclone Akvan: CM

PTI

Kolkata, Nov 20: West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Friday said the state government was fully prepared to deal with the possible impact of Cyclone Akvan.

Adhikari chaired a high-level meeting at the state secretariat with Chief Secretary Manoj Agarwal and Home Secretary Sanghamitra Ghosh.

Senior officers of various departments and districts likely to be affected by the cyclone were present.

In a social media post after the meeting, the chief minister said the government was closely monitoring the situation and had made preparations to ensure public safety and facilitate relief and rescue operations.

"Our priority is to protect the lives and property of the people through advance disaster preparedness, ensuring public safety, making necessary arrangements for relief and rescue operations, and taking prompt administrative action in every situation," he said.

Adhikari said the administration had been directed to remain prepared to deal with any emergency.

According to a well-placed source at the secretariat, Adhikari spoke to district magistrates and superintendents of police via video conferencing while taking stock of the rainfall situation and the preparedness to deal with any eventuality.

The CM sought detailed reports from district administrations on the extent of damage to agricultural land and crops following incessant rainfall.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Akhtara Bano, D/o Late Fatah Mohammad Khuroo, R/o Rabitar, Ganderbal, hereby inform the general public that I have lost my Discharge Certificate and Provisional-cum-Character Certificate issued by Government High School, Rabitar, Ganderbal, where I was enrolled under Admission No. 170 in the year 2010. My Date of Birth is 31-12-1990.

I intend to apply for duplicate certificates. Objections, if any, may be submitted before the Headmaster, Government High School, Rabitar, Ganderbal, within seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice. No objection shall be entertained thereafter.

Sd/-
Akhtara Bano
D/o Late Fatah Mohammad Khuroo
R/o Rabitar, Ganderbal

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER GANDERBAL

Notice

Whereas, ant application for Re-registration/Transfer of Ownership has been received from Mr./Mrs/Miss PRAMOD KUMAR S/D/W of Resident of D-88 GALI NO GANESH NAGAR PANDAV NAGAR EAST DELHI 1100 in Respect of LMV/Three wheeler/Motor Cycle/MOTOR CAR Bearing Reg No PLCM1845 Chassis No MAITAIMYNDI Engine No MXD4H1460 Infavour of MOHD ASHRAF MIR S/D/W of MOHD RAMZAN MIR Resident of: DURPORA MANIGAM GANDERBAL KASHMIR (Transferee). Now, therefore, it is notified for the information of the general public that the representation/objection, if any in connection with proposed Re-registration/Transfer will be received within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper Leading Papers to the address of undersigned.

No, representation/objection shall be considered unless it is made in written and shall be submitted within the aforesaid period.

No. JK/ARTOG/.
Dated..

Sd/Assistant Regional Transport Officer

LOSS OF NUMBER PLATE

I have lost number plate of my Auto vehicle bearing No JK16C-1301 somewhere between WAHID PORA to LAR namely Sahil Habib S/o Habib ULlah Baba R/o Watal bagh Ganderbal. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the ARTO Ganderbal within a period of 07 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

SAHIL HABIB
S/o HABIB ULLAH BABA
R/o Watalb bagh Lar Ganderbal.
Vehicle No: JK16C-1301

THE COURT OF JUDICIAL MAGISTRATE FIRST CLASS, GANDERBAL

Present: Ms. Rameen Rashid Khan
JO Code: JK00316
In the Case of:
Mohammad Huzaif war (minor) S/o mehraj ud din war
through his father Namely Mehraj ud din war s/o late Ghulam hassan war r/o Gadoora Ganderbal
V/S
UT of J&K through Registrar Birth and Death Block Ganderbal Block Development officer Ganderbal
Respondent
In the matter of: Application for issuance of appropriate directions for delayed registration of birth u/s 13(3) of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 as amended.
To,
The General Public

PROCLAMATION

1. The instant application came to be filed before this court on under Section 13 (3) of Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir Registration of Births & Death Rules 2000 by the applicant seeking the issuance of direction on Registrar Births and Deaths, for registering Date of Birth of the applicant namely

2: Whereas this court has ordered that the objection from the general public be called for issuance of birth certificate in favour of the above named person.

3. Therefore, this proclamation is issued through this newspaper calling upon the general public to file objections, if any, within a period of seven days, to the issuance of such certificate failing which this court this court shall proceed in accordance with law.

Announced
1/C ADDITIONAL SPECIAL MOBILE MAGISTRATE
GANDERBAL

J&K wins India Sports Award for promoting sports

KT News Desk

New Delhi, 20: The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has been selected for the prestigious India Sports Award 2026 under the category "Best State/UT Promoting Sports" by the FICCI India Sports Awards Jury.

The recognition acknowledges the Government's sustained efforts towards strengthening the sports ecosystem, promoting sporting culture and creating opportunities for young talent across Jammu & Kashmir.

The award is a testament to the Government's commitment to nurturing sporting excellence through the development of



sports infrastructure, strengthening grassroots sports initiatives, encouraging youth participation and providing a platform for aspiring athletes to showcase their talent at national and international levels.

Over the years, Jammu & Kashmir has witnessed renewed momentum in the sports sector, with focused interventions aimed at making sports an integral part of youth development, discipline, confidence-building and nation-building.

The recognition assumes particular significance as it places Jammu and Kashmir among the leading states and UTs in the country in terms of promoting sports and institutionalising a vibrant sporting culture.

The India Sports Awards 2026 ceremony was held at FICCI Federation House, New Delhi, as part of FICCI TURF 2026, the 16th Global Sports Summit. The award stands as an encouragement to the sporting fraternity, young athletes, coaches, sports administrators and all stakeholders who have contributed to the growth of sports in the Union Territory of J&K. The prestigious honour is not merely an award but a recognition of Jammu and Kashmir's growing sporting aspirations and its commitment to building a healthier, stronger and more empowered generation through sports. Naila Zahoor, Director Finance, Youth Services & Sports Department J&K, received the award on behalf of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

Russia strikes Ukraine with missiles and drones, killing at least eight

AP

Kyiv, Nov 20 : Russian missiles and drones hammered targets across Ukraine in a prolonged nighttime attack, officials said Friday, hours after Vladimir Putin vowed to retaliate against Kyiv for aerial strikes this week on a bridge linking occupied Crimea with the Russian mainland that is vital for Moscow's war effort.

The strikes killed at least eight Ukrainian civilians and wounded more than two dozen, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, as Russia fired more than 400 drones and over 110 missiles, 27 of them ballistic and some carrying cluster warheads that scatter dozens of smaller bomblets across a wide area.

The attack fit the pattern of Moscow's heavy responses to eye-catching Ukrainian attacks, such as the one on the Kerch Bridge, and added to uncertainty about the prospects for ongoing US-mediated efforts to end the war, which began after Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion of its neighbour.

Both sides have continued to bombard each other even as US President Donald Trump and his envoys work to find a settlement.

Trump discussed the war at a summit in China on Thursday with Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, according to his envoy Steve Witkoff. Another envoy, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, told European leaders that the United States believes Russia is "comfortable" with NATO-like security guarantees for postwar Ukraine, in what could be a step toward compromise.



Zelenskyy appeared unimpressed with Moscow's strategy of attempting to redefine international security arrangements. He said on Friday on X that Russia launched the overnight attack "following weak meetings in China and the actual failure of (Putin's) attempt to somehow 'redraw' the world."

Moscow and Kyiv are still far apart on the possible terms for a peace deal. The US-led talks are expected to continue but no date is set for a next meeting.

Russia targets Ukraine's missile and drone plants

Russian forces conducted a "massive" strike on targets in Ukraine, the Defence Ministry in Moscow said Friday, claiming the sites hit were linked to the Ukrainian military.

Ukraine said the attacks killed at least eight civilians, including six in the capital, Kyiv, and wounded more than a dozen as apartment blocks, medical facilities, warehouses and three bridges took hits.

In Kyiv and the surrounding region, bridges used for transporting military cargo were also struck, according to the Russian Defence Ministry. Russia also hit a facility where Flamingo missiles are assembled, a plant making components for rocket fuel, and a facility where drones are assembled, it said.

Ukrainian officials said domestically produced drones and missiles were used in the attacks on the Kerch Bridge, which for Ukrainians is a powerful symbol of Moscow's attempt to capture their country and for Putin an object of pride.

Russia's nighttime barrage also extended its campaign to knock out Ukraine's power grid ahead of winter. Strikes on power plants, substations and electricity transmission networks forced Ukraine's three operational nuclear power plants to reduce generation, bringing emergency outages in 11 regions, said Deputy Energy Minister Artem Nekrasov.

European leaders are worried about Trump-Putin ties

European leaders' concerns about Moscow's broader ambitions on the continent have added tension to relations with Trump over his recent conciliatory approach to Putin.

Saudi Arabia intercepts Houthi missiles and drones as tensions rise

AP

Dubai, Nov 20 : Saudi Arabia said on Friday that Iran-backed Houthi rebels had fired more missiles and drones at the kingdom, days after it launched a major air campaign across Houthi-controlled parts of Yemen.

Meanwhile, in Iraq, troops deployed to a militia stronghold south of Baghdad, the country's capital, after the government apparently reached a compromise with a powerful Iran-backed militia it accused of smuggling oil.

Here is the latest news from the Middle East on Friday. Read our full coverage here.

Iraqi forces deploy to area known as Iran-backed militia stronghold Iraqi security forces set up a command headquarters on the outskirts of the Jurf al-Sakhar area south of Baghdad, long a stronghold of an Iran-backed militia, Kataib Hezbollah, on Friday.

The area had been the source of rising tensions, with the government calling for the militia to withdraw amid allegations that it was using the area for oil smuggling.

Kataib Hezbollah had threatened to fight security forces if they attempted an incursion.

Two Iraqi officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to comment publicly, said the government and Kataib Hezbollah had reached an agreement under which security forces could enter but the militia would not immediately withdraw.

The deal followed negotiations facilitated by Esmail Qaani, commander of Iran's Quds Force, a branch of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard that's responsible for operations outside Iran and is key to Iran's influence and ties to allies across the Middle East.

Under the agreement, the Iraqi army, federal police and police tied to the energy sector will be deployed in the area. In a compromise, the deployment will also include fighters from the Popular Mobilization Forces, a collection of mostly Shiite armed groups close to Iran that are officially part of Iraq's security forces.

Italy strike draws workers and students into protests over wages and living costs

AP

Rome, Nov 20 : A nationwide strike was expected to disrupt schools, hospitals and local transport across Italy on Friday as workers and students began marching in dozens of cities to demand higher wages, lower living costs and greater social protections.

The 24-hour strike, called by Italy's largest trade union, CGIL, was set to bring demonstrations to more than 100 cities, from Milan and Turin in the north to Naples, Palermo and Rome. Protesters denounced stagnant wages, rising living costs and what organisers called the government's failure to strengthen public services and worker protections.

The labour action coincided with an International Day of Student Mobilisation, with organisers planning demonstrations in more than 45 Italian cities. Student groups joined workers in calling for greater investment in education, measures to ease the cost-of-living crisis and policies aimed at reducing inequality.

J&K Sports Council Secretary reviews arrangements at Junior National Tennikoit Championship

KT News Desk

Jammu, Nov 20: Secretary of the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council, Tazayun Mukhtar, visited Green Field, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu, today to review arrangements and interact with athletes participating in the ongoing 43rd Junior National Tennikoit Championship, which has drawn contingents from 22 states.

During her visit, Ms. Mukhtar inspected the arrangements put in place for the smooth conduct of the championship and reviewed the facilities available to players and officials. She also interacted with the young athletes and urged them to display high standards of sportsmanship, skill and competitive spirit, while extending her best wishes for their matches.

Appreciating the dedication of the organising team, she reiterated the J&K Sports Council's commitment to promoting sports across the Union Territory and creating strong platforms for young athletes to showcase their talent at the national level.

She wished all participating teams success and expressed confidence that the championship would be a memorable and enriching sporting experience for every competitor.



Rijiju rejects claim of religious bias over Siraj's exclusion

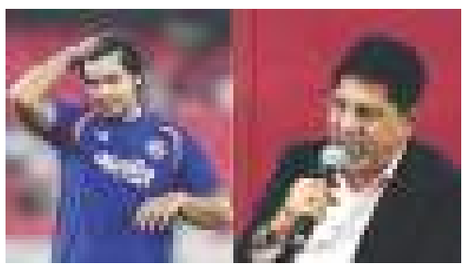
PTI

New Delhi, Nov 20 : Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday dismissed Congress MP Imran Masood's insinuation of communal bias in dropping fast bowler Mohammed Siraj from the playing XI in the ongoing cricket Test match against New Zealand, saying nobody in India is discriminated against or overlooked on the basis of their religion.

The BJP leader's remarks came after the MP from Saharanpur and UP Congress working president allegedly said that Siraj was not given a place in the side because of his name. Asked about Masood's comments, Rijiju told reporters here, "Nobody here is discriminated against or overlooked on the basis of their religion. In our country, opportunities are given based on merit." One's religion or caste has nothing to do with it, he added. "If someone feels this way, it is not right. The PM said that we are all one and we have a goal of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' and 'Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat', then there is no need to create divides on the basis of caste or religion," Rijiju said. Slamming the Congress over Masood's remarks, BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said on X, "Shame on Congress party! Congress party did not even leave the Indian cricket team from its vote bank politics! Congress party is communal!"

Srikkanth says selectors and team management are discouraging Sooryavanshi

PTI



New Delhi, Nov 20 : Former India captain and chief selector Krishnamachari Srikkanth on Friday criticised the selectors and team management for not giving enough opportunities to teenage batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, saying he is such a potential match-winner who could even help revive Test cricket globally.

Srikkanth said the 15-year-old should be backed consistently rather than being picked for a match and then left out.

"What they (selectors and team management) are doing with him is not right. They are not encouraging him; they are discouraging him, which is not done. These guys are making a blunder. They play him for one match, they don't play him for five matches. That's not done. Sad," Srikkanth said at the 16th FICCI Summit on the Business of Sports here.

The former opener, who was part of India's 1983 World Cup-winning team, went a step further, suggesting that Sooryavanshi's success in Test cricket could spark renewed interest in the longest format across the world.

"If Sooryavanshi clicks in Test cricket, a Test cricket revival happens all over the world, not just for India, all over the world. Today in New Zealand, when he was playing the T20 matches, people came all the way – a full crowd – to watch Sooryavanshi bat. Wherever he goes, everybody comes to watch Sooryavanshi bat," he said.

Srikkanth urged the team management to give the youngster a sustained run, insisting that he was good enough to play both ODI and Test cricket.

"This boy has done so brilliantly for you – let him play all the matches. Do you mean to say he is not good enough to play Test or One Day cricket? He is 100 per cent sure to play good One Day cricket. Give him 20 innings, tell him he won't get dropped – you do whatever you want. That boy will win five to seven matches single-handedly for you.

