

North in News

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Postal Regd. No. JK/504/19-21

VOL. NO. 14 | ISSUE NO. 91

JAMMU, THURSDAY, 09 APRIL 2026

E-paper: <https://northinnews.com/epaper/> PAGE 12 RS. 3.00

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US, Israel and Iran agree to 2-week ceasefire much remains unclear and some attacks continue

Tehran, Apr 8 : Iran, the United States and Israel agreed to a two-week ceasefire in an 11th-hour deal that headed off US President Donald Trump's threat to unleash a bombing campaign to destroy Iranian civilization. But hours after the announcement, Iran and Gulf Arab countries reported new attacks Wednesday.

It was not clear if the strikes would scuttle the deal, which US Vice President JD Vance called "fragile." Even before the new attacks, much about the agreement was unclear as the sides presented vastly different visions of the terms.

- Iran said the deal would allow it to formalise its new practice of changing ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial transit lane for



oil. But the details were not clear, nor was it known whether vessels would feel safe using the channel or whether ship traffic had resumed. It also was unclear whether any other country agreed to this condition.

- Pakistan, which helped to mediate the deal, and others said fighting would pause in Lebanon, where Israel has launched a ground invasion against the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group. Israel said it would

not, and strikes hit Beirut on Wednesday.

- The fate of Iran's missile and nuclear programs - the elimination of which were major objectives for the US and Israel in going to war - also remained unclear. Trump said the US would work with Iran to remove buried enriched uranium, though Iran did not confirm that.

In the streets of Tehran, pro-government demonstrators screamed: "Death to America, death to Israel, death to compromisers!" after the ceasefire announcement and burned American and Israeli flags. The chants underscored the anger animating hard-liners, who have been preparing for what many assumed would be an apocalyptic

(Contd on Pg 2)

PM Mudra Yojana has redefined access to credit by empowering millions: Modi

NEW DELHI, Apr 8: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the PM Mudra Yojana has strengthened the spirit of enterprise across India by removing barriers and trusting the aspirations of the people. On 11 years of the PM Mudra Yojana, Modi said the scheme has redefined access to credit by empowering millions with the confidence to dream and the means to fulfil it. "By removing barriers and trusting the aspirations of our people, it has strengthened the spirit of enterprise across India," the prime minister said on X.



PM Mudra Yojana reflects an economic ethos where opportunities are accessible, initiatives are encouraged and every dream is given the support to grow, Modi said. "A glimpse of PM Mudra Yojana's transformative potential and how it has positively impacted our Yuva Shakti

and Nari Shakti," Modi said and tagged a post by the citizen engagement platform of the government - 'MyGovIndia' on the PM Mudra Yojana.

"Real economic transformation doesn't always begin in boardrooms. Sometimes, it starts with a small loan, a local idea, and the courage to begin. Mudra Yojana is quietly reshaping the foundation of India's economy. By enabling collateral-free credit, it has reduced dependence on informal lending, expanded financial inclusion, and strengthened credit discipline at the grassroots." (MyGovIndia)

(Contd on Pg 2)

BRIEF NEWS

Damp weather boosts wild mushroom yield in Bhadrawah forest

Bhadrawah (J&K), Apr 8 : Damp weather conditions over the past fortnight have transformed Bhadrawah's coniferous forests in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district into a harvesting cluster for a seasonal wild mushroom, opening an earning avenue for local women and offering a delicious culinary experience for others. Kuntal mushroom, or earth cup fungus, which had largely disappeared from Himalayan forests over the past few years due to prolonged dry weather, has made a strong comeback this season, growing in abundance amid the

(Contd on Pg 2)

Heavy showers may lead to flash floods, landslides in parts of Kashmir: Met

Srinagar, Apr 8 : The popular tourist resort of Gulmarg and few other areas in the higher reaches of Kashmir received fresh snowfall on Wednesday, Srinagar and other areas in the plains of the valley were lashed by rains, the weather office said. Intermittent light to moderate rain, and snow would continue in the higher reaches till Wednesday evening, accompanied with thunder, hail and gusty winds at a few places.

(Contd on Pg 2)

LG chairs 2nd University Council Meeting of Cluster University of Srinagar

Jammu, Apr 8: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday chaired the 2nd meeting of the University Council of the Cluster University of Srinagar at Lok Bhawan, Jammu. The University Council, which met under the chairmanship of the Lieutenant Governor, accorded in-principle approval to various agenda items and proposals including establishment of Abdul Ahad Azad Chair and adoption of postgraduate curriculum framework under NEP 2020 as per UCC guidelines. The Lieutenant Governor directed the Cluster University Srinagar to implement targeted reforms aimed at bolstering academic excellence and



student welfare. He further directed the University for full implementation of e-office systems to modernize university administration and enhance operational efficiency. The Lieutenant Governor empha-

sized the need for uniformity in recruitment rules for non-teaching positions across all universities within the Union Territory to ensure a transparent and streamlined process. He

(Contd on Pg 2)

LG sacks 2 govt employees over 'terror' links

Srinagar, Apr 8 : Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has terminated the services of two government employees as part of his "zero-tolerance to terror" policy, officials said on Wednesday. The dismissed employees have been identified as Farhat Ali Khanday and Mohammad Shafi Dar, the officials said.

They said the dismissals were executed under Article 311(2)(c) of the Constitution and are part of the on-going drive to root out

(Contd on Pg 2)

Over 600 heritage sites identified in J&K; CM calls for expert engagement for tourism push



Jammu, Apr 8 : With over 600 heritage sites identified across Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday called for structured engagement with national and international agencies to unlock

their tourism potential. Abdullah was addressing a meeting on heritage promotion and cultural tourism to review measures for conservation and adaptive reuse of heritage assets aimed at

(Contd on Pg 2)

'Welcome ceasefire between US, Iran': Farooq Abdullah

Srinagar, Apr 8 : National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah on Wednesday welcomed the ceasefire between the US and Iran, saying dialogue was the only option as war has never been a solution. "I thank God for giving courage to the US and Iran to sit at the table and resolve their issues, because there is no other option than dialogue," Abdullah told reporters here. "War has never been a solution, and it will never be. So, I, and on behalf of our people, congratulate these countries (the US and Iran) and hope they will sit and talk. I pray to God that they talk about peace as this war affected the entire world," he said. The former J&K chief minister said they want peace as many people from the country, especially from J&K, work in Arab countries. "We are worried about the plight of the people who work there and earn a livelihood. We want the war to stop," he added. Abdullah, who was a Union minister in Prime Minister Manmohan Singh-led cabinet between 2009 and 2014, expressed hope that India would play its part to diffuse the tensions. To a question about the US reportedly accepting Iran's 10-point proposal, Abdullah said there are proposals from both sides, and there will be discussions on them. "I hope India also lends its help as it is a friend of the US, because it will have a huge impact on us as well," he said. "May God take them to a point where peace gets established," he

(Contd on Pg 2)

CAG flags delay in finalisation of accounts of various PSUs, autonomous bodies

Jammu, April 8 : The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has flagged a massive backlog in the finalisation of accounts of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and autonomous bodies in Jammu and Kashmir, with large number of accounts remaining in arrears as on March 31, 2024. The CAG urged the UT government to ensure strict adherence to timelines for preparation and submission of accounts to strengthen financial discipline, transparency and governance. The audit panel warned that the persistent backlog undermines transparency and legislative oversight, and recommended that the government ensure companies, corporations and autonomous bodies submit their annual accounts within



stipulated timeframe. The CAG report on Union Territory (UT) finances for the year ended March 31, 2024, said, "Accounts in respect of only four companies were audited up to 2022-23. In respect of 35 companies and corporations, audit of 139 accounts was in arrears for periods ranging from one to twelve years." According to the report, eight autonomous bod-

ies have together failed to submit 40 annual accounts, with delays ranging from three to 14 years. The CAG stressed that delays in finalisation of accounts keep the results of government investments outside legislative scrutiny, hampering timely corrective measures and weakening accountability. The report highlighted that several key entities have accumulated signifi-

cant arrears. Jammu and Kashmir Overseas Employment Corporation Ltd tops the list with 12 pending accounts since 2010-11, followed by Jammu and Kashmir Minerals Limited and Jammu and Kashmir International Trade Centre Corporation Ltd and Jammu and Kashmir Road Development Corporation Ltd - each with nine years of arrears. Jammu and Kashmir Cable Car Corporation Ltd has eight pending accounts since 2014-15, while Jammu and Kashmir Medical Supplies Corporation Ltd has seven accounts pending since 2015-16, it added. Jammu and Kashmir Police Housing Corporation Ltd has six years of arrears, and Jammu and Kashmir

(Contd on Pg 2)

Five LeT operatives remanded in police custody for 10 days in Kashmir

Srinagar, Apr 8 : A local court on Wednesday sent five operatives - two Pakistani nationals and their three local supporters - affiliated with proscribed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist outfit to 10 days police custody here, an official said. The five were arrested following the uncovering of a "deep-rooted" interstate LeT module headed by Pakistani terrorist Abdullah Hureira, who had been on the run for 16 years and successfully established bases outside the Union Territory. Hureira, along with another Pakistani terrorist Usman alias Khubaab and three Srinagar residents identified as Mohammad Nageeb Bhat, Adil Rashid Bhat, and Ghulam Mohammad Mir alias

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FROM PAGE ONE

US, Israel...

battle with the United States. Trump warned Tuesday that "a whole civilisation will die tonight," if a deal wasn't reached.

Varying reports of ceasefire's terms

Trump initially said Iran proposed a "workable" 10-point plan that could help end the war the US launched with Israel on Feb. 28. But when a version in Farsi emerged that indicated Iran would be allowed to continue enriching uranium - which is key to building a nuclear weapon - Trump called it fraudulent without elaborating.

Vance later said the deal was being misrepresented within Iran, though he did not offer details.

Iran's demands for ending the war include a withdrawal of US combat forces from the region, the lifting of sanctions, and the release of its frozen assets.

In his post Wednesday, Trump said: "We are, and will be, talking Tariff and Sanctions relief with Iran."

It was not clear if other Western nations would agree to that, and the other points are likely nonstarters. United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres's personal envoy arrived in Iran for talks on "the way forward."

Pakistan said talks to hammer out a permanent end to the war could begin in Islamabad as soon as Friday.

Israel backed the US ceasefire with Iran, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the deal does not cover fighting against Hezbollah.

Israeli Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir said Israel will continue to "utilise every operational opportunity" to strike Hezbollah. The Israeli military said it struck more than 100 targets within 10 minutes Wednesday across Lebanon, the largest wave of strikes since March 1.

Hezbollah has not confirmed if it will abide by the ceasefire, though the group has said it was open to giving mediators a chance to secure an agreement. An official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to comment publicly, said the group would not stop firing at Israel unless Israel agreed to do the same.

Iran and Oman will collect shipping fees in Strait of Hormuz

While Iran could not match the sophistication of US and Israeli weaponry or their dominance in the air, its ability to control the Strait of Hormuz proved a tremendous strategic advantage.

Iranian attacks and threats deterred many commercial ships from passing through the waterway, through which 20 per cent of all traded oil and natural gas passes in peacetime. That roiled the world economy and raised the pressure on Trump both at home and abroad to find a way out of the standoff.

The ceasefire may formalise a system of charging fees in the strait that Iran instituted - and give it a new source of revenue.

The plan allows for both Iran and Oman to charge ships, according to a regional official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss negotiations they were directly involved in. The official said Iran would use the money it raised for reconstruction.

That would upend decades of precedent treating the strait as an international waterway that was free to transit and will likely not be acceptable to the Gulf Arab states, which also need to rebuild after repeated Iranian attacks targeting their oil fields.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said passage through the strait would be allowed under Iranian military management - further clouding the picture of who would be allowed to transit the waterway.

News of the ceasefire sent stock markets surging worldwide, and oil prices plunged back toward USD 90 per barrel.

Fate of Iran's nuclear and missile programs remains unclear

US-Israeli strikes have battered Iran and its leadership, but they have not entirely eliminated the threats posed by Tehran's nuclear program, its ballistic missiles or its support for regional proxies, like Hezbollah. The US and Israel said addressing those threats was a key justification for going to war.

Trump said Wednesday that the US would work with Iran to "dig up and remove" enriched uranium that was buried under joint US-Israeli strikes in June. He added that none of the material had been touched since. Any retrieval is expected to be an intensive undertaking.

There was no confirmation from Iran on that. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth told a Pentagon briefing Wednesday that the US would do "something like" last June's joint strikes with Israel on Iranian nuclear sites if the country refuses to surrender its enriched uranium voluntarily.

Tehran insisted for years that its nuclear program was peaceful, although it enriched uranium up to 60 per cent purity, a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels.

Iran referred to its nuclear program differently in two versions of the ceasefire plan that it released. The version in Farsi included the phrase "acceptance of enrichment" for its nuclear program. That phrase was missing in English versions shared by Iranian diplomats with journalists.

Hegseth said the US military has done its part "for now" but stands ready to ensure Iran complies all the ceasefire's terms. Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said more than 13,000 targets have been struck in Iran, destroying 80 per cent of the country's air defence systems and attacking 90 per cent of its weapons factories.

More than 90 per cent of Iran's regular naval fleet has been sunk, "including all major surface combatants" with 150 ships now "at the bottom of the ocean," Caine told reporters at a Pentagon briefing.

Airstrikes reported in the hours after the deal is announced

Shortly after the ceasefire announcement, Bahrain, Israel,

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates all issued warnings about incoming missiles from Iran. That fire stopped for a time, then hostilities appeared to restart.

An oil refinery on Iran's Lavan Island came under attack, according to Iranian state television. Its report said that fire-fighters were working to contain the blaze but no one had been hurt. It did not say who launched the attack.

The island is home to one of the terminals that Iran uses to export oil and gas.

A short time later, the United Arab Emirates' air defences fired at an incoming Iranian missile barrage. Kuwait's military forces, meanwhile, responded to an "extensive wave" of drone attacks. Saudi Arabia said it intercepted nine drones. Kuwaiti authorities said three power and water desalination plants have been severely damaged after 28 Iranian drones were launched on the oil-rich country Wednesday.

More than 1,900 people had been killed in Iran as of late March, but the government has not updated the war's toll for days.

In Lebanon, where Israel is fighting Iran-backed Hezbollah militants, more than 1,500 people have been killed, and 1 million people have been displaced. Eleven Israeli soldiers have died.

In Gulf Arab states and the occupied West Bank, more than two dozen people have died, while 23 have been reported dead in Israel, and 13 US service members have been killed.

PM Mudra...

said in a post on X. It also shared a thread to see how first-time entrepreneurs, especially women and underserved communities, are stepping forward.

"Micro businesses are scaling, local jobs are emerging, and informal enterprises are steadily becoming part of India's formal economic fabric," the government platform said.

For 11 years, the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana has acted as an 'Anjali Mudra', a dedicated offering to the country's entrepreneurial energy, the MyGovIndia' said.

"By bridging the gap between ambition and credit, it has transformed over 52 crore job seekers into business owners," it said.

The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana launched in 2015 aims at providing credit of up to Rs 10 lakh to small entrepreneurs and act as a regulator for micro-finance institutions. Mudra targets young educated or skilled workers and entrepreneurs including women entrepreneurs. (Agencies)

LG chairs...

directed the Cluster University Srinagar for increased youth participation under the "Viksit Bharat Yuva Connetc" and various other national integration programmes. He also called for intensifying the awareness campaigns under the

Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan.

"Universities and educational institutions must discharge their responsibility towards the society and lead the fight against drug menace," the Lieutenant Governor said. Prof. Mohammad Mobin, Vice Chancellor Cluster University Srinagar presented the progress report of the University. The Registrar of the University presented the various agenda items before the Council for report, consideration and ratification.

The meeting was attended by Prof. Mohammad Mobin, Vice Chancellor Cluster University Srinagar; Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu; Prof. K.S. Chandrasekar, Vice Chancellor, Cluster University Jammu; Shri Shaileendra Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department; Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Prof Rama Shanker Dubey, former Vice Chancellor, Central University of Gujarat; Prof. P. K. Abdul Aziz, former Vice Chancellor Aligarh Muslim University; Prof. Syed Wilayat Hussain Rizvi, Registrar, Cluster University Srinagar and other members of the Council.

LG sacks....

terrorists embedded in the government machinery. While Khanday was working as Class-IV employee in education department in Ramban district, Dar was working as a Class-IV employee in Rural Development Department in Bandipora.

Over 600...

boosting tourism in the Union territory.

The meeting was informed that over 600 heritage sites have been identified across Jammu and Kashmir, including both protected and unlisted monuments, reflecting the vast scale of opportunity in the sector, an official spokesman said. Advocating a holistic and forward-looking approach, the chief minister emphasised the need to blend conservation with commercialisation and community engagement.

"Jammu and Kashmir's vast heritage wealth must be leveraged as a dynamic engine for tourism and economic growth, while ensuring preservation of its cultural legacy," he said, stressing the need to strengthen institutional mechanisms and develop heritage-based tourism circuits to posit Jammu and Kashmir as a premier cultural tourism destination.

He underscored the importance of learning from national and international agencies that have successfully undertaken conservation and adaptive reuse of heritage properties.

Abdullah called for structured consultations with such stakeholders to draw upon technical expertise and professional inputs for transforming heritage sites into viable tourism assets.

The meeting also discussed in detail the proposed constitution of the Jammu and Kashmir Heritage Conservation and Preservation Authority, with emphasis on strengthening its institutional capacity and ensuring effective implementation of conservation policies, the spokesman said.

He said a detailed presentation by concerned officials highlighting the immense heritage potential of Jammu and Kashmir, encompassing both tangible and intangible assets such as monuments, forts, shrines and performing arts traditions. It was noted that despite this diversity, many heritage sites remain underutilised and are facing gradual deterioration due

to limited technical expertise, fragmented institutional mechanisms and inadequate financial and policy support, the spokesman said.

He said a key focus of the presentation was the adoption of adaptive reuse models, particularly through public-private partnership (PPP) frameworks.

Drawing from successful examples in states such as neighbouring Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, it illustrated how neglected heritage structures can be transformed into vibrant cultural and tourism destinations, the spokesman said.

He said projects such as Qila Mubarak (Patiala), Neemrana Fort and Orcha Fort were cited as examples where heritage hotels, museums and experiential spaces have generated revenue while preserving historical integrity.

The presentation also reviewed the existing legal and institutional framework under the Jammu and Kashmir Heritage Conservation and Preservation Act, 2010, identifying critical gaps including the inactive status of the Heritage Conservation Authority, lack of inter-departmental coordination and outdated institutional structures, which have hindered effective conservation and promotion efforts, the spokesman said.

To address these challenges, he said a reform proposal was presented, including reconstitution and strengthening of the Jammu and Kashmir Heritage Conservation and Preservation Authority with expanded powers, revised composition and active leadership.

The proposal also emphasised integrated planning, development of heritage tourism circuits, promotion of heritage hotels through PPP mode, and strategic branding of Jammu and Kashmir as a premier cultural and wedding destination, the spokesman said.

'Welcome...

said. Asked about Israel keeping Lebanon out of the ceasefire, the NC chief said Israel is also facing losses, and they have not escaped from it.

"There is also much destruction there, and they cannot end that by fighting wars," he said.

The senior Abdullah also refused to credit any country for brokering the ceasefire, saying it was God's doing.

"I will not give credit to any country, but say that God created a way and they are trying to tread that path," he added.

Referring to China and Russia, Abdullah asserted that the world is no longer unipolar, and said if India has to develop and prosper, "we have to offer the hand of friendship to every country."

"We can move forward through friendship, and animosity will take us backwards. I will also tell Pakistan that the time has come for it to let go of terrorism and take the path of prosperity and brotherhood. There is no other way," he added.

CAG flags...

Asset Reconstruction Ltd also has six accounts pending since 2017-18.

Among other major defaulters, Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Corporation Ltd has five accounts pending since 2017-18, while the Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) has five pending accounts with no accounts submitted since 2018-19, it said. Several infrastructure and transport-related entities also reported delays.

Jammu and Kashmir Mass Rapid Transit Corporations have four accounts pending each since 2019-20, while Jammu and Kashmir Power Transmission Corporation Ltd, Jammu and Kashmir Power Corporation Ltd and Srinagar Smart City Ltd have four pending accounts each. Jammu Smart City Ltd has three accounts pending, while Jammu and Kashmir Forest Development Corporation Ltd has three pending accounts.

The report further noted that multiple corporations, including Jammu and Kashmir Projects Construction Corporation Ltd and Jammu and Kashmir Handicrafts (Sales and Export) Development Corporation Ltd, have four pending accounts each.

Among eight autonomous bodies, the CAG said that the Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority (CAMPAA) accounts for the highest pendency with 14 accounts pending from 2009-10 to 2022-23.

Similarly, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), Srinagar and Jammu have three pending accounts each for the period 2020-21 to 2022-23. Jammu and Kashmir Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has not submitted four accounts from 2015-16 to 2018-19, it added.

Other bodies with arrears include Jammu and Kashmir Housing Board (four accounts), Khadi and Village Industries Board (three), Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board (four), and State Legal Services Authority (five), it added.

Similarly, accounts of the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs departments in Kashmir and Jammu have remained pending for decades, with some periods dating back to the 1970s, it said.

Five LeT...

was arrested on Tuesday. The five were produced in a local court in Srinagar which remanded them in police custody for 10 days, the official said. They said a number of suspected persons were picked up for questioning as the probe is underway to identify additional associates, financiers, facilitators, safe houses and in-state linkages.

The busting of the LeT network in a major operation comes six months after the dismantling of a "white-collar" terror cell centred at Faridabad's Al Falah University that was linked to the Red Fort blast on November 10, 2025.

The operation, which began on March 31 and was monitored by Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat who camped in Srinagar, has unveiled the funding and financial

pattern of the LeT, officials said.

The terrorists used forged documents and identities to create a network not just in Jammu and Kashmir, but in several other states, they added.

Over the last few days, Srinagar police along with police forces of other states and central agencies carried out searches at 19 locations across Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan and Haryana.

The raids led to the recovery of a large cache of weapons, including four AK assault rifles, pistols, hand grenades and electronic gadgets.

The two Pakistani terrorists are categorised as 'A+' grade militants and the officials said they infiltrated India approximately 16 years ago and remained active across various districts of the Kashmir Valley, commanding around 40 foreign terrorists over the years, most of whom have since been neutralised, the officials said.

Forged documents with addresses from other states were recovered from Abdullah and Usman, indicating the use of false identities to facilitate movement outside the valley, they said.

Probe findings also suggest that one foreign terrorist managed to travel outside the country on a valid passport made from forged documents.

The elaborate network began to unravel on March 31 when the first of the three Srinagar residents, Nageeb Bhat, was arrested from Pandach area along with a pistol and other incriminating material.

During his questioning, he said that he was part of the LeT and procured the arms and ammunition from another associate, Adil Rashid of Zakora. He also provided support to foreign terrorists, the officials said. From Bhat, police were led to Mir and Rashid Bhat, both active associates in Srinagar. The officials said the probe indicates that a foreign terrorist managed to travel outside the country on the basis of forged documents and identity with the help of the Lashkar-e-Taiba network in other states.

During the investigation, following disclosures from those arrested, various hideouts were also busted in forested areas in and around Srinagar.

In the earlier 'Al Falah operation' in November 2025, Srinagar police unravelled a network comprising highly educated professionals, mostly doctors, who had been radicalised to carry out terrorist activities.

One of the accused was the Al Falah University's Dr Umer-un-Nabi, who was driving the explosives-laden car that detonated outside the Red Fort on November 10, 2025, killing more than a dozen people.

He had earlier made unsuccessful attempts to join terror groups in 2016 and 2018, the officials said.

Damp...

prevailing damp weather conditions. Collecting the mushrooms from the forest and selling them to local vegetable markets fetch up to Rs 3,000 a day each for a large number of workers from the Bhaderwah valley along the dense cedar forest.

Women living in villages of Bhudda, Chinta, Duggi, Kansar, Ghuraka, Chinchora, Jatani, Thubba, Dhumanda, Saringtal, Katyara, Mathola, Hanga and Shankhoja make it their routine, harvesting the fungi at dawn and selling them in the market by the dust on a daily basis.

Selling the mushrooms would fetch them Rs 400 to 700 per kg during the entire season.

"Kundi, the season's most cherished harvest that we used to collect from forests soon after the snow melted, had been missing for the past two to three years. Its absence was deeply felt across the village, as many families traditionally depend on it during early spring," said 67-year-old Kalyana of village Bhudda.

She said, its abundant return this year has brought immense joy. "Our group has been collecting Kundi for the past 20 days, and it is not only reviving a tradition but also providing us with a good source of income."

According to Ajay Kumar of village Chinta, the incessant rains in the recent past have turned the forests into a treasure trove of Kundi, making the otherwise quiet forests lively and vibrant.

The sale of Kundi provides livelihood for many families, while most of the vegetable vendors display it as a key attraction during the season.

"This year, I have recorded my highest-ever sales of Kundi since starting my business a decade ago. Most of the stock in my shop is already pre-booked, with orders coming not only from locals but also from Delhi," said Anil Kumar, a vegetable vendor from Jaie Road, Bhaderwah.

He said over the past 20 days, he has sold Kundi mushrooms worth around Rs 5 lakh, and women are earning around Rs 3,000 a day by collecting and supplying them to his shop.

Kundi is often found growing in shaded, humid areas after the melting of snow in the post-winter and a spell of rain during spring.

Apart from being a tasty seasonal kitchen staple, Kundi is also known for its medicinal properties.

Heavy...

the Met said. Few places in Kashmir may also receive moderate to heavy rain, while few areas in the higher reaches may witness moderate snow till Thursday morning.

A brief spell of light rain/thundershower is also likely at scattered places on Thursday and Friday, it added.

While the weather would remain generally dry from April 11 to April 16, there is a possibility of brief spell of light rain at a few places towards afternoon and evening hours, the weather office said.

Heavy showers for a brief period may lead to flash floods/landslides at a few vulnerable places and water logging in few low-lying areas, it added.

Jammu Railway staff praised for honesty, recover lost belongings of passengers

RPF and ticket checking staff of Northern Railway return valuable items, earn certificates of appreciation for exemplary service

Jammu: The ticket checking staff of the Jammu Division of Northern Railway has once again demonstrated their unwavering commitment to passenger service through their honesty and vigilance. Through the joint efforts of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the ticket checking staff, a bag belonging to a female passenger—containing valuable items—was safely recovered and handed back to her at Srinagar Railway Station.

Recounting the full sequence of events, on April 6th, a female passenger inadvertently left her bag behind at the entrance of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Railway

Station. The bag contained gold jewelry, cash, and several important documents. The bag was discovered by the RPF staff on Train No. 26403, the Vande Bharat Express. The RPF staff immediately handed it over to the train's ticket checking staff. To locate the rightful owner of the bag, the checking staff on duty made public announcements three times while the train (No. 26403) was in motion, aiming to convey the information to the concerned passenger; however, they were unable to establish contact with the passenger at that time. Exercising their presence of mind, the train's ticket checking staff—Shri Adil



Hussain and Shri Akib Ahmed—traced the passenger's mobile number and informed her about the bag. Upon reaching Srinagar, the female passenger approached the ticket

checking staff at Srinagar Station and reported her lost bag. Taking swift action, the ticket checking staff cross-referenced the recovered bag with the details provided by the passenger. After completing the verification process, the bag was safely handed over to the passenger. The passenger expressed her deep gratitude to both the Railways

and the checking staff. In a separate incident, a passenger traveling on the Vande Bharat Express (Train No. 22478) inadvertently left their trolley bag behind at Kathua Railway Station after disembarking from the train. During this same period, Mr. Navdeep Anil (CCTC), an employee stationed at Kathua Railway Station, discovered a trolley bag. He immediately took secure custody of the bag and contacted the passenger. After completing the necessary verification process, the bag was handed over to the passenger, who expressed his gratitude to the railway employee. Adding to this series of commendable and exem-

plary acts, on April 8th, the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Mr. Uchit Singh, honored the ticket checking staff—Mr. Mandeep Kumar (Headquarters: Jammu), Ms. Monika (Headquarters: Pathankot), and Mr. Amit Kumar (Headquarters: Jammu)—with Certificates of Appreciation. These individuals were recognized for their unwavering dedication to duty, their outstanding performance, and their significant contribution to revenue generation through ticket checking. Commenting on these praiseworthy actions, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Mr.

Uchit Singh stated, "The Railways serves not merely as a means to transport passengers to their destinations, but is also fully committed to ensuring their safety and the security of their belongings. The promptness and integrity demonstrated by the ticket-checking staff of the Jammu Division is a matter of pride for the entire railway fraternity. In recognition of this commendable service, the ticket-checking staff of the Jammu Division has been honored with Certificates of Appreciation, an initiative intended to further boost their morale and motivation while performing their duties."

SRS raises concern over alleged harassment of Hindu businessmen in Jammu

JAMMU, Apr 8: The Shri Ram Sena (SRS) has expressed serious concern over the alleged harassment of several well-established Hindu businessmen in Jammu over the past six months.

In a statement issued here today, SRS members said that a number of prominent establishments, including Panjabi Brothers, Fish Wholesale Sellers in Gumat Bazaar and warehouses, Gupshup Restaurant/Home Stay and Palwalwan Meat Shop, have reportedly been facing repeated action from authorities. He alleged that these businesses are being targeted through sealing of their premises and imposition of heavy challans, despite operating with valid per-



missions and licenses. He further stated that most of these establishments deal in "JATKA" non-vegetarian products and are key contributors to local employment, providing jobs to over 100 people. Raising further concern, SRS pointed out that in certain cases, officials have taken DVRs of CCTV footage from business establishments without

issuing any receipt. This, the organization said, raises serious questions about accountability and responsibility in case of any theft or untoward incident at the premises. SRS warned that such actions are creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among traders and could adversely affect the business environment and employment in the Jammu region.

Yudhvir Sethi, MLA Jammu East Visits GGM Science College, Promises Full Support Towards a Better Teaching-Learning Environment

Jammu, 8th of April 2026: Hon'ble MLA Jammu East, Sh. Yudhvir Sethi, visited GGM Science College to review the ongoing developmental works and interact with the faculty members regarding the academic and infrastructural progress of the institution. The visit marked an important step towards strengthening educational infrastructure and enhancing the teaching-learning environment of the college.

During the visit, the Principal of the College, Prof. (Dr.) Romesh Kumar Gupta, warmly welcomed the Hon'ble MLA and briefed him in detail about various developmental initiatives completed as well as those currently underway in the campus. He highlighted the significant improvements made in academic facilities and infrastructure under recent development plans. After visiting the Classroom Block of the heritage building, Hon'ble MLA urged the executing



agencies to speed up the renovation work as there seems to be urgent need for upgradation and renovation of these classrooms, emphasizing that modernization of these classrooms will meet contemporary educational requirements. Interacting with the faculty members, MLA Sh. Yudhvir Sethi appreciated the academic achievements and infrastructural progress

of the college. He expressed satisfaction over the developmental works being carried out under the able leadership and vision of Principal Dr. Romesh Kumar Gupta. He assured full support from his side for all initiatives aimed at strengthening infrastructure and improving the overall teaching and learning ecosystem of the institution. Officials from the project execut-

ing agency PWD R&B Department, including the Executive Engineers (XENs) of both Gandhinagar and Bakshi Nagar wings along with their technical teams, were also present on the occasion. Er. Sandeep Gupta from the Bakshi Nagar wing assured that the renovation and upgradation work of classrooms within the Heritage Block would be completed within six months. Meanwhile, Er. Sarfaraz Ahmed from the Gandhi Nagar wing informed that the work assigned to their division is almost complete and the remaining minor works will be finalized as soon as the required funds are released. The visit concluded on a positive note with renewed commitment from all stakeholders towards the continued development and modernization of GGM Science College, ensuring improved facilities for students and faculty alike.

"Cancelled Trains, Delayed Vande Bharat - Passengers Suffer Amid 'Date After Date': Shiv Sena"

Jammu: The Jammu & Kashmir unit of Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) has launched a sharp attack on the Central Government and Railway authorities over the repeated delays in the much-awaited Jammu-Srinagar Vande Bharat Express and the large-scale cancellation of trains.

State President Manish Sahni, in a strong statement, said that the historic dream of connecting Kashmir to Kanyakumari by rail has now been trapped in an endless cycle of "date after date." He alleged that poor planning, lack of coordination, and administrative indecision have raised serious questions over the credibility of this ambitious project. Sahni stated that after the launch of the Katra-Srinagar rail service in June 2025, an extension up to Jammu was promised. However,



between January and April 2026 alone, the inauguration date has already been changed three times. A total of seven postponements so far reflect a complete failure of planning and execution by the

Railways. He further pointed out that while announcements regarding Vande Bharat continue, nearly 20-22 long-distance trains from Jammu, Katra, and Udhampur have been can-

celled until May-June 2026. This decision has come at a time of peak travel season, leaving passengers struggling with long waiting lists and severe ticket shortages. Shiv Sena also expressed

concern over the upcoming Amamah Yatra 2026, for which dates have already been announced. The cancellation of trains has created confusion and uncertainty among lakhs of pilgrims, highlighting the lack of preparedness by the Railways ahead of such a major religious event. Sahni demanded that the Railways immediately announce a final and clear date for the commencement of the Jammu-Srinagar Vande Bharat service, issue a white paper explaining the technical and administrative reasons behind repeated delays, and restore all cancelled trains without further delay. He warned that if concrete steps are not taken soon, Shiv Sena will be compelled to take to the streets and launch a strong and aggressive agitation.

Sakshi Gupta, Principal Economist, HDFC Bank commented on RBI Monetary Policy

JAMMU, 08 April 2026: Against the backdrop of an uncertain geopolitical scenario, the RBI prudently chose to be patient instead of being reactionary in its policy today, keeping its stance and the policy rate unchanged. The policy tone was balanced and wait and watch, abstaining from indicating any hawkishness. As we expected, no extreme or out of box measures were announced at this point. The central bank recognised the upside risks to inflation that have already emerged, upping its forecast for FY27 (due to higher energy costs) while being cautious on growth. That said, this outlook was balanced by the re-iteration of the fact that the economy was witnessing strong fundamentals prior to the war which enhances the absorptive capacity of the economy to the current West Asia



shock. Moreover, the RBI indicated that inflation starting points are also comfortable, implying that inflation could remain within the RBI's target band in FY27. Comments around the rupee also showcased strong confidence building by the RBI to manage any exaggerated moves, while maintaining its stance of not targeting particular levels of the rupee.

We estimate inflation at 4.9% for FY27 and growth at 6.8-7%, assuming the current conflict is short-lived and the current ceasefire holds. The policy rate could remain unchanged through FY27 under this scenario. The rupee could find some stability over the coming days along with some cooling off in the 10-year bond yield with a 6.8-7% range likely to emerge.

Several Power Projects built on rivers in J&K by the NHPC should be returned to the Jammu and Kashmir union territory must now be handed back to us: Ajeet Bhagat

KISHTWAR// National Confrance Senior leader and Spokesperson of Chenab Valley Region Ajeet Bhagat said several power projects built on rivers in Jammu and Kashmir by the NHPC should be returned to the Jammu and Kashmir union territory. The projects where the Government of India has already invested and from which revenue has been generated for years must now be handed back to us. We are facing a power crisis, and reclaiming these projects will help resolve it." The National Confrance leader said under the existing arrangement, the Jammu and Kashmir union territory receives only 12 per cent of the power generated from NHPC-operated projects while the remaining 88 per cent is allocated outside. Whenever NHPC sets up a power project on our rivers, we get only 12 per cent of the generated power. The rest goes outside. We believe the projects



that have already recovered their investments and earned substantial revenue should now be transferred back to Jammu and Kashmir," he added.

Jammu Municipal Corporation and Jammu Smart City Limited Announce Grand Tawi Mahotsav to Celebrate Baisakhi

Jammu, April 8, 2026 Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) and Jammu Smart City Limited are preparing for the Swachh Tawi Mahotsav, a major celebration of local heritage and environmental care. Organized by the Housing and Urban Development Department, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, this event will be held at the 4th Tawi Bridge to mark Baisakhi. The festival highlights JMC's ongoing work to make Jammu a cleaner and more culturally active city under the Swachh Bharat Mission Urban 2.0. The details were shared during a press conference today at the JMC Conference Hall. JMC Commissioner Dr. Devansh Yadav was joined by Joint Commissioner (H&S) Abdul Star and Joint



Commissioner (R&E) Subah Mehta, along with Swachhata Champions, JMC officials, the Secretary, and staff members who have worked on the city's cleanliness drives. Their involvement shows the teamwork behind managing this large-scale cultural and environmental project.

show, cultural programs, and fun rides for children, making the riverfront a main attraction during the mela. Speaking at the press conference, Commissioner JMC Dr. Devansh Yadav, alongside Joint Commissioner Abdul Star and Joint Commissioner Subah Mehta, said that the Mahotsav is a way to celebrate local traditions while committing to keep the Tawi River clean for the future. The Commissioner announced that the Tawi Mahotsav will be a three-day event held on April 14, 15, and 16. Organized with the Departments of Tourism and Information, the festival will take place on the left bank of the Tawi riverfront, which will be fully open to the public. The event includes the Dangal, food stalls with authentic

BLSKS presents dress Rehearsal Musical Play "Mata Sukrala Ke Kahani"

Jammu, 08/04/2026
The "Mata Sukrala - MalMata" dance, drama cum musical production in the shape of opera under the title "Mata Sukrala Ke Kahani" dedicated to promote the concepts of peace, Coexistence, National Integration and Communal Harmony was unveiled today in final rehearsal by the artists of Bhartiya Lok Sangeet Kala Sansthan at Abinav Theatre Jammu. The ballad conceived produced & directed by Dr Mohan Lal Dogra Chairman (BLSKS) will be Staged by over 40 artists drawn from all sections of society would enrich Duggar culture, tra-



ditional folk theatre of Jammu region. The production would go a long way in reviving/sustaining traditional folk of J&K as well as channelizing the energies of youth towards National building. The Production is unique of its kind and will reveal the untold story of the highly revered deity popularly known as Mal Mata of Duggar Pradesh. The production is well scripted with all traditional folk lore form of Duggar Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh like as

Ras, Jaggar, Gagthel, Chhinj, Hira Ham, Jatar and Bhagati(Folk Jagar theatre of Jammu and Kashmir) which has religious ramifications. There can be no doubt about the fact that traditional art form reflect the ideals of the society, its determination to survive, its ethos, emotions, fellow-feeling and so on. Drama itself is a complete form of arts. The Play has been specially designed by exposing all traditional folks of Jammu region including Jagar (Jadian), Karikan, Baran, Folktheatre, songs, Music Instruments and dances Bhakh, Haran, Chhajja, Thali, Dhole, Mangal Geet etc, convey-

Several delegations meet Jal Shakti Minister at Mendhar



MENDHAR, APRIL 08: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana today met several public delegations from different areas of his Mendhar constituency and listened to their grievances and development-related demands. During the interaction, the delegations projected a range of issues pertaining to strengthening of health infrastructure, improvement of road connectivity, augmentation of electricity and drinking water supply. Giving a patient hearing to the public representa-

tives, the Minister issued on-the-spot directions to the concerned officers for immediate examination and time-bound resolution of the genuine issues raised by the delegations. Reiterating Omar Abdullah led government's commitment towards equitable development and improved service delivery, the Minister assured the people that all priority concerns related to basic infrastructure and essential services would be addressed in a phased and systematic manner.

"Be Responsible Drivers": MVD Kathua hold road safety awareness programme in school

Kathua, April 8: To promote road safety and sensitize youth about traffic rules, the Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) Kathua organised an awareness programme at M.H.S. DAV Higher Secondary School here today. A large number of students and teachers participated. ARTO Kathua Shripad Kumar who presided over the event, said today's youth are the responsible drivers of tomorrow and stressed that negligence and violation of traffic norms are the main causes of road accidents. He urged students not to drive without a valid licence, to wear helmets and seat belts, and avoid over-speeding, drunken driving and use of mobile phones while driving. Motor Vehicle Inspectors Jatinder Chib and Vikas Shrivats, Senior MVI Neeraj Kumar and other officials also addressed the gather-

ing. They educated students about traffic signals, road signs, pedestrian safety and safe driving practices. An interactive session was held, during which students raised queries that were answered by the officials. The students were also apprised of the causes and consequences of road accidents, highlighting that even minor negligence can lead to serious mishaps. The school administration appreciated the initiative and expressed hope for more such programmes. Meanwhile, officials also highlighted the PM Rahat Scheme, under which road accident victims are entitled to cashless treatment up to Rs 1.5 lakh during the "Golden Hour". The scheme, implemented by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in collaboration with the National Health Authority, covers all victims irrespective of

Traffic Crackdown in Rajouri: Over 20 E-Autos Seized in Joint Enforcement Drive

RAJOURI, April 08: In a decisive enforcement operation aimed at curbing traffic violations and enhancing commuter safety, the Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) Rajouri, in coordination with the Jammu & Kashmir Police, conducted a joint traffic naka outside the Police Lines here on Tuesday. The drive resulted in the seizure and challaning of more than 20 e-autos found violating transport regulations. The naka was carried out under the supervision of ARTO Rajouri Rajesh Gupta, with active involvement of the SHO Rajouri and a team of officials from both departments, including inspectors and sub-inspectors. During the operation,



stringent action was taken against e-auto operators lacking valid documents, driving without licenses, and operating beyond their authorized routes. Authorities also seized several e-autos entering Rajouri town from adjoining

tehsils and plying illegally, contributing to traffic congestion. Officials underscored that such unauthorized operations not only breach provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act but also pose significant risks to passenger safe-

ty. The enforcement team further targeted vehicles modified with additional seating capacity and unauthorized sound systems, both of which are in violation of prescribed transport norms. Speaking to the media, ARTO Rajouri Rajesh Gupta stated that the department has been receiving consistent complaints regarding illegal e-auto operations, particularly from vehicles entering from outside jurisdictions. He emphasized that these activities are a direct violation of transport laws and assured that similar joint drives will be intensified in the coming days to ensure discipline on roads and safe commuting for the public.

Vijay Lochan Reaffirms NC's Commitment to SC Upliftment, Urges Cadre to Prepare for Polls*

Samba, April 8: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (NC) SC Cell Chairman, Vijay Lochan, today reiterated that the upliftment of the Scheduled Caste (SC) community remains the cornerstone of the party's vision and mission. Addressing a convention of the party's SC wing at Garh Mandi, Samba, Lochan highlighted the historic reforms introduced under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah, including land-to-the-tiller policies, liquidation of rural indebtedness, abolition of jagirdari and muafi systems, protection of tenant rights, and wage enhancements for labourers. He emphasized that these measures brought significant socio-economic transformation, particularly benefiting marginalized communities. Lochan also underscored initiatives in education, healthcare, and food security that improved living standards,



with special gains for the SC population in Jammu and Kashmir. Stating that the condition of SC communities in J&K is better compared to many other parts of the country, he credited the NC's pro-

gressive policies for the progress achieved. Lochan further said that the government led by Omar Abdullah is committed to following the same developmental blueprint and addressing setbacks of

the past decade. He urged party workers, especially members of the SC wing, to gear up for the upcoming ULB and Panchayat elections with full preparedness. Among others who were present in the meeting included: Mohinder Singh Senior leader, Bua Ditta Block President, Jagga Ram Pranshan Vice President SC Cell, Dharshan Lal Block President Ghagyal SC Cell, Satishwar Block President Rajpura SC Cell, Gulshan Kumar Block President SC Ramgarh, Ashok Kumar Block President SC Cell, Hardeep Singh, Manhor Lal, Kishore Lal, Balbir Singh Vice President District Samba, Hasham Din District Secretary Samba, Yashpal Block Rural, Charan Dass, Lambardass, Kewal, Happy Singh, Pinky Singh, Bhadur Singh District Vice President Samba, Yashpal Padma and others.

Workshop on modern lesson planning approaches held in GDC

KATHUA: A one-day workshop on "Lesson Planning in Different Teaching Approaches" was organised at Lal Bahadur Shastri College of Education, Rajbagh, in collaboration with Government Degree College, Kathua, on Tuesday. Dr Ram Singh Sambyal, Head of the Department of Education, GDC Kathua, Dr Yash Pal Sharma, Head of Urdu Department, and Dr Brij Kohli, Principal of the host college, were the chief guests on the occasion. The programme commenced with a welcome address followed by the ceremonial

lighting of the lamp. Speaking on the occasion, the organisers said the workshop aimed to familiarise teachers and students with modern and effective teaching methodologies and make lesson planning more engaging and result-oriented. Resource persons including Priyanka Sharma, Jyoti Sharma, Renu Wala and Naresh Sangra deliberated on Herbartian and RCEM approaches, highlighting both traditional and contemporary teaching methods. They emphasised the importance of student participation, assessment and clearly defined learning objectives in preparing effective lesson plans. The workshop featured group activities, interactive sessions and practical exercises, providing hands-on experience to students and prospective teachers. Dr Ram Singh Sambyal and Dr Yash Pal Sharma appreciated the initiative and stressed the need for organising such programmes regularly to enhance teaching skills. Faculty members, including Dr Rama Verma and Dr Suman, along with students of 8th semester from GDC Kathua, attended the workshop.

Jasrotia urges Monsoon readiness to prevent loss of life and property

Calls for robust contingency planning, identification of vulnerable zones and real-time public alert systems

Jasrota: BJP MLA from Jasrota, Rajiv Jasrotia, on Tuesday urged the J&K Government and all concerned departments to immediately gear up for the forthcoming monsoon season, stressing the need to take decisive and proactive measures to avoid recurrence of disasters that have, year after year, caused loss of life, property, and widespread disruption across the Union Territory. Speaking on the occasion, Jasrotia highlighted the persistent vulnerabilities that J&K faces during heavy rains, including landslides, flash floods, road blockages, waterlogging in urban and semi-urban areas, and damage to crops and infrastructure. He stressed that a lack of preparedness in past years has repeatedly amplified the impact of natural calamities, and timely, coordinated action could prevent such crises in the future. "Monsoon is not just a season; in J&K it is a test of administrative readiness and community resilience. Every year, lives and livelihoods are put at risk due to delayed response and inadequate planning. The government must take pre-emptive steps to ensure that vulnerable areas, critical roads, bridges, and water channels are fortified well before the rains hit," Jasrotia said. Emphasizing disaster preparedness, the MLA called for the formulation of robust contingency plans at the

district and block levels, along with clear identification of high-risk zones prone to landslides, floods, and waterlogging. He underscored the need to maintain ready stockpiles of essential equipment, including rescue and relief gear, dewatering pumps, ambulances, and emergency supplies to enable rapid response in crisis situations. Jasrotia also stressed the importance of seamless coordination among key agencies such as the Public Works Department (PWD), Disaster Management authorities, Border Roads Organisation (BRO), local administration, and health departments to ensure quick restoration of roads, drainage systems, and essential services in case of emergencies. He emphasized that proactive repair of drainage systems and water channels can significantly reduce waterlogging and prevent urban flooding. Highlighting the critical role of communication, Jasrotia urged all departments to actively use official media platforms, social media, and local alert systems for real-time dissemination of weather warnings, advisories, and emergency information. "Accurate and timely alerts save lives," he said, urging authorities to ensure that local communities are fully informed and prepared. Further, the MLA called for strengthening early warning systems.

J&K's Growth Hinges on Social Harmony: Deputy CM Surinder Choudhary

Omar led govt working with 'Last Person First' Governance Agenda* : Rattan Lal Gupta.

Jammu, April 08: Senior leader of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Surinder Choudhary, today reiterated that the government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is committed to ensuring that the benefits of good governance reach the last person in the remotest corners of Jammu & Kashmir. He was addressing a Samagam organized to commemorate the Prakash Utsav of Shri Guru Nabha Das Ji Maharaj. The event was organized by the All J&K Mahasha Sadar Sabha at Dogra Hall, Jammu, under the aegis of the Goswami Guru Nabha Dass Ji Maharaj Trust. Surinder Choudhary attended the event as the Chief Guest, while Provincial President Jammu, Rattan Lal Gupta, was the Guest of Honour. The programme was presided over by Kali Dass



Panotra, President of All J&K Mahasha Sadar Sabha. In his address, Deputy Chief Minister highlighted the rich spiritual heritage of Jammu & Kashmir, noting that the region's social, political, and cultural fabric has been profoundly shaped by sages and saints from diverse sects and faiths. He emphasized that their teachings promote unity, piety, penance, and love for humanity. He further stated that the government under Omar Abdullah remains deeply conscious of this

legacy and is working in an inclusive and unbiased manner to ensure welfare, development, and administrative ease for all, irrespective of caste, creed, or religion. Reaffirming the party's ideological commitment, he said that at Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, from the era of Sheikh Abdullah to the present leadership, has upheld the values of secularism and humanism. He stressed that the progress of Jammu & Kashmir depends on unity in diversity and equitable develop-

ment. On the occasion, Kali Dass Panotra submitted a memorandum of demands to the Deputy Chief Minister, seeking the construction of a Guru Nabha Dass Hostel for students of the Mahasha community, installation of a statue at Guru Nabha Dass Chowk, establishment of hostel facilities at the Guru Nabha Dass Temple for community members and visiting devotees, and relocation of the slaughterhouse situated opposite Dogra Hall Temple, citing longstanding religious and environmental concerns. Responding to the demands, Surinder Choudhary assured that necessary provisions would be made for the construction works and that the other issues would be examined on priority. Speaking on the occasion, Rattan Lal Gupta paid rich tributes to Shri Guru Nabha Das Ji Maharaj and stated that the true tribute to such spiritual figures lies in fostering unity and harmony in society. He also highlighted various initiatives undertaken by successive governments for the upliftment of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other backward classes, adding that the present government has reinvigorated efforts in this direction. Others who were present included: Shamim Begum, former DDC Nagrota, Pardeep Bali, Vijay Lochan Chairman SC Cell, Rakesh Singh Raza Vice President Central Zone, Man Mohan and others.

Bharat Priye leads farmers' outreach in Anantnag

JKPCC Chairman listens to grassroots concerns, demands concrete policy support and relief measures for J&K's farming community

Anantnag: Continuing his outreach programme to directly engage with the farming community, JKPCC Chairman Bharat Priye on Wednesday visited Anantnag, where he held an interactive session with local farmers to understand their pressing issues and challenges. Accompanied by District Congress Committee Anantnag President Mohd Abdullah and District Rajouri Kissan Congress President Arun Sharma, Bharat Priye met several farmers and orchardists, who highlighted a range of concerns affecting their livelihoods, including rising input costs, inadequate irrigation facilities, erratic weather patterns, and lack of timely government support. During the interaction, Bharat Priye assured the farmers that their voices would be strongly represented at appropriate



forums. He emphasized that agriculture remains the backbone of Jammu & Kashmir's economy and stressed the urgent need for a farmer-centric approach in policymaking. He expressed concern over the declining returns for farmers despite increasing costs of fertilizers, seeds, and transportation. "Farmers are struggling to sustain themselves. Without timely intervention, the situation

may worsen, impacting not only rural livelihoods but also the region's overall economy," he said. Bharat Priye called upon the government to ensure assured Minimum Support Price (MSP) mechanisms for key crops and demand the establishment of better procurement systems to protect farmers from exploitation by middlemen. He also stressed the need for expanding irriga-

tion infrastructure, especially in rain-dependent areas, and urged authorities to expedite pending projects. Highlighting the vulnerability of farmers to climate change, he advocated for comprehensive crop insurance schemes and immediate compensation for losses due to natural calamities. He further demanded easy access to low-interest loans and subsidies to help farm-

ers cope with rising input costs. The JKPCC Chairman also underlined the importance of strengthening horticulture, particularly apple growers in South Kashmir, by improving storage facilities, cold chains, and market linkages to ensure fair pricing. Reiterating his commitment to sustained engagement, Bharat Priye said the outreach programme would continue across different districts to build a comprehensive understanding of farmers' issues and push for effective solutions. He assured that the concerns raised in Anantnag would be taken up vigorously with the concerned authorities to secure timely redressal. Local farmers appreciated the initiative, expressing hope that such direct interactions would lead to meaningful policy action and tangible improvements in their conditions.

DC Srinagar reviews progress of upgradation, renovation works at Banquet Hall-Conference Complex at MA Road

SRINAGAR, APRIL 08: Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Wednesday conducted an on-site inspection of the ongoing upgradation and renovation works at the Banquet Hall-Conference Complex at M.A. Road, Srinagar. He also reviewed the progress of renovation and upgradation works being carried out within the complex. During the visit, the DC was accompanied by Chief Planning Officer, Fayyaz Ahmad Dar, Superintendent Engineer Hydraulic, Sajad Kawoosa, Executive Engineer R&B, Khalid Mehmood, Executive Engineer U&ED, Shabir Hussain and other senior Officials and Engineers. During the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner assessed the progress and quality of works being executed at the site. He emphasized the need for maintaining high standards

and ensuring timely completion of the project in accordance with the prescribed specifications. He also emphasized the need for a robust and efficient Audio-Visual(AV) system at the Conference Complex to enhance its overall functionality and ensure seamless conduct of official proceedings. The DC underscored the importance of creating a well-equipped and efficient space in district to cater to official meetings, high-level interactions and other administrative engagements. The DC further reviewed the ongoing renovation and allied works of the other units within the Banquet Hall Complex. He conducted a detailed assessment of the progress achieved so far and the quality of execution. The DC directed the executing agencies to ensure that the upgradation and renovated Banquet Hall-Conference Complex is

completed in all respects by the end of this month, enhancing its overall utility and functionality while preserving its historical and administrative significance. Highlighting the importance of the facility, the Deputy Commissioner stated that the Banquet Hall on M.A. Road serves as a vital venue for hosting government meetings, delegation-level discussions, official functions, and citizen-centric awareness programmes. During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner also reviewed the renovation process of gutted security huts. He was informed that approximately 90 percent of the work has been completed. He also assessed measures being undertaken to address drainage-related issues within the premises. The DC directed the concerned departments to expedite the remaining works and ensure seamless completion within the stipulated timeframe.

DC Budgam reviews Hajj-2026, SANJY-2026 arrangements at Srinagar Airport

BUDGAM, APRIL 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan today visited Srinagar International Airport Humhama, to review the arrangements put in place for the smooth dispatch of Hajj pilgrims 2026, scheduled to commence 18th of this month, and also assessed preparedness for the upcoming Shri Amarnath ji yatra (SANJY) 2026. During the visit, the DC conducted a comprehensive inspection of facilities available for pilgrims and passengers. He reviewed arrangements related to clean drinking water, medical facilities, refreshment counters, volunteer assistance, traffic regulation within and outside the airport premises, immigration processes, baggage handling systems, Zam Zam water storage

etc. Emphasis was laid on ensuring seamless coordination among departments for efficient passenger management and timely facilitation. While reviewing the arrangements for Hajj pilgrims, the DC stressed the need for maintaining high standards of hygiene, adequate seating, proper guidance mechanisms, and hassle-free movement of pilgrims from entry points to boarding areas. He underscored the importance of deploying sufficient manpower and ensuring round-the-clock assistance for elderly and special-needs pilgrims. On the occasion, the DC also reviewed the preparedness for SANJY-2026, focusing on coordination among stakeholder departments, logistical readiness, and facilitation

measures for pilgrims expected during the Yatra period. He highlighted the importance of proactive planning, effective traffic management, and public convenience to ensure smooth conduct of the pilgrimage. The DC reiterated the need for close inter-departmental coordination and continuous monitoring to ensure that all arrangements are executed efficiently and in a timely manner for the convenience of pilgrims. The activities highlighted the institution's continued commitment towards strengthening evidence-based healthcare and promoting preventive health awareness at the grassroots level. The institutional academic programme was held at the college auditorium under the guidance of Prof. (Dr.)

World Health Day 2026 Observed At SKIMS Medical College Bemina With Academic Deliberations & Community Outreach

SKIMS Principal Prof. (Dr.) Fazlul Parrav Highlights Importance Of Early Prevention & Public Health Awareness

Srinagar, 08 April, 2026: On the occasion of World Health Day 2026, the Department of Community Medicine, SKIMS Medical College & Hospital Bemina organised a comprehensive programme combining academic discussions with community outreach initiatives, in line with the global theme "Together for Health, Stand with Science." The activities highlighted the institution's continued commitment towards strengthening evidence-based healthcare and promoting preventive health awareness at the grassroots level. The institutional academic programme was held at the college auditorium under the guidance of Prof. (Dr.)



Ashfaq Ahmad Bhat, Professor and Head, Department of Community Medicine, who also served as the Organising Chairperson, while Prof. (Dr.) Fazlul Qadir Parry, Principal, SKIMS Medical College & Hospital, Bemina, was the Patron of the event. In his address, Prof. (Dr.)

Fazlul Qadir Parry emphasised the growing importance of scientific evidence and ethical medical practice in addressing emerging public health challenges. "The observance of World Health Day reminds us that strong healthcare systems must be built on scientific evidence, ethical medical

practice and collaborative engagement across disciplines. Initiatives that promote awareness, prevention and early intervention are vital for ensuring better health outcomes and strengthening public trust in healthcare institutions," said Prof. (Dr.) Fazlul Qadir Parry. The programme commenced with a welcome address by Prof. (Dr.) Ashfaq Ahmad Bhat, who highlighted the significance of the global theme and underscored the role of community medicine in bridging the gap between clinical science and public health awareness. The academic session featured expert talks and a panel discussion by distinguished faculty members

Dozens from Karnah North Kashmir Kupwara District Join PDP at Srinagar Headquarters

Srinagar, April 8: In a significant political development, dozens of individuals from Karnah constituency on Wednesday joined the Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) at the party headquarters in Srinagar. The joining programme was held in the presence of Party President Mehbooba Mufti, accompanied by Party General Secretary Mohammad Khurshed Aalam, District President Kupwara Mohammad Afzal Wani, and Zonal President Karnah Dr. Mohammad Abbas. Prominent among those who joined

the party include Adv. Basarat Waheed, Bashir Ahmad Awan, Abdul Waheed, Dr. Parvaiz Ahmad, Dr. M. Abbas, Dr. Shamim Khawaja, Nowshad Ahmad Khan, Naveed Anjum, Khalid-ul-Islam, Mohammad Ismail, Ikhtlaq Ahmad, M. Jamail Joo, Manzoor Ahmad, Mohammad Shafi, Abid Waheed, Salikh Hussain, Zakir Hussain, Khurshed Ahmad, Khurshed Khawaja, Tasleem Ahmad, Ishtaq Ahmad, M. Sameer, Zakir Ahmad Mir, Waqar Ahmad, Fayaz Ahmad, and several others. Welcoming the new entrants,

Mehbooba Mufti expressed confidence that their inclusion would further strengthen the party at the grassroots level, particularly in the Karnah region. She emphasized the importance of collective efforts in addressing public issues and reaffirmed the party's commitment towards peace, development, and the welfare of the people. The new members expressed their faith in the leadership and vision of the party and pledged to work wholeheartedly for strengthening the party and serving the people.

SKUAST-K launches NextGen e-Plant Clinic at Shalimar Campus

SRINAGAR, APRIL 8: Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) today signalled a paradigm shift in regional agriculture with the inauguration of a high-tech ecosystem dedicated to digital advisory and farmer-centric innovation. In a ceremony at the varsity's Directorate of Extension, Shalimar, Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai accompanied by University Officers, Heads of Divisions and Scientists launched a suite of next-generation facilities. These include the e-Plant Health Clinic, Farmer School Centre, Agri-Clinic and Agri-Business Centre and the newly established Conference Hall of the Directorate of SAMETI Kashmir. The launch was also attended by progressive farmers and orchardists who hailed the move as a 'game-changer' for the region. Prof Ganai described the e-Plant Clinic as a critical bridge between laboratory breakthroughs and field-level reality. "We are moving from reactive to proactive agriculture," Prof Ganai said. "This platform leverages digital tools for the instant diagnosis of pests and diseases, ensuring that our farmers aren't just guessing, they are acting on scientific certainty," he added. Director Extension, Prof Raishana Habib Kanth emphasized that these facilities are 'enhancers of capacity building'. She highlighted how the integration of the Agri-Business Incubation Centre will transform the local landscape by fostering a culture of innovation and startups among the educated youth.

DC Budgam reviews developmental projects, key Public issues of Budgam Division

BUDGAM, APRIL 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, today chaired a review meeting to assess the progress of developmental projects and address key public issues pertaining to Division Budgam of the District at the Conference Hall, DC Office Complex. At the outset, the Assistant Commissioner Revenue Budgam, Afroza Bano presented a detailed overview of the administrative and developmental profile of the sub-division. It was informed that Sub-Division Budgam comprises one tehsil, four niabats, 23 patwar halgas, and 107 revenue villages, along with two CD blocks and one Council. A detailed department-wise review was conducted, covering major sectors including Public Works (R&B), Jal Jeevan Mission (PHE), Power Development Department (PDD), Health, Education, Revenue, Rural Development, Social Welfare, Irrigation & Flood Control, and Urban Development. The Social Welfare Department apprised the chair that under ICDS, a significant number of beneficiaries are being covered,

including 8,852 children (6 months to 6 years), 572 pregnant women, and 598 lactating mothers. The meeting was also informed about the upgradation of one Palma Creeche Centre and seven Bal Vatikas centres in the division. The Public Works (R&B) Department presented updates on various ongoing works, including Capex, PRI, BDC, CDF, and DMRRR projects. Progress under Jal Jeevan Mission was also reviewed, with emphasis on timely completion of water supply schemes. The Health Department briefed the meeting on healthcare services, including implementation of the PM Dialysis Programme at the District Hospital Budgam. The School Education Department highlighted infrastructural gaps, particularly the requirement of land for 46 rented school buildings. The KPCL and Irrigation & Flood Control departments also presented updates on their respective works and service delivery mechanisms. The Municipal Council Budgam provided details of works under various State Capex Budgets, including FC Grants, IDMT, and Normal Sources.

DDC Anantnag convenes Public Durbar at Dooru

Assures time bound resolution of genuine Public Grievances

ANANTNAG, APRIL 08: To address the concerns and grievances of the local community and ensure efficient public service delivery, the District Development Commissioner (DDC) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohiud Din Bhat today convened a Public Durbar and outreach cum grievance redressal camp, at Rasool Mir Auditorium, Dooru. The program was attended by ADC, CPO, ACD, CAO, CEO, CAHO, DD Fisheries, ARTO, ALC,

BMO, BDOs, CDPO, Exens R&B, PHE & PDD, AEEs, TSWO, EO MC, officials from various other departments besides Ex DDC & PRI members and representatives from SHGs, civil society and general public. During the program, the DDC gave a patient hearing to the residents who raised issues pertaining to road connectivity, health care services, banking facilities, rationalization of teaching staff and school infrastructure, beautification and tourism promotion,

electricity bills, ration stores, irrigation facilities, tourism amenities and infrastructure, relocation of government offices, among others. The demands included upgradation of Anantnag Dooru Verinag Road and widening of Sabdran & Dooru bridges, Mini Secretariat at Dooru, specialists at SDH Dooru, commissioning of Water Filtration Plant, parking space, public toilets and solar lights in town areas, development of Rasool Mir & Bakshi Park, construction of Munsif Court and shopping complexes, beautification of Dooru Lixer Road, Bus Service from Dooru to Srinagar and aligning movement of SRTC Buses with school timing in Kapran, career counseling programs for students and youth, irrigation facilities in Dooru, Bramag, Nowpora and Nathipora areas, utilisation of services of Marriage Hall at Mehmooodabad, water supply to Naidpora and Larkipora, Naidpora-Hakura, Arampora & Trajan Nowpora Nad Road

construction, ambulance for hilly areas of Shahabad, connecting Kapran with ADV Road widening, minimising wild animal attacks in upper areas, separate PDD feeders, culvert bridge, circular road and children park Nowgam, upgradation of Verinag Qazigund Road, fencing of retrieved state land, construction of HS Batagund and Samagra School Chowgund, SBI Branch Qamar Shahabud, Kapran Drangrang Filtration Plant and playfields for Gawas and other areas.

The DDC issued on spot directions to revenue authorities to identify suitable land required for Schools at Batagund and Chowgund in consultation with the School Education Department. R&B and Revenue authorities were instructed to take appropriate actions on ADV and other roads as demanded by the public. Directions were issued to PHE Department to submit a detailed report on the alternate source proposed for Water Supply Schemes under JJM for Naidpora

and Larkipora Villages. Regarding Water Filtration Plant Dooru, the PHE authorities informed that the same will be commissioned within next 2-3 weeks while as 95 percent work has been completed on Kapran Drangrang Filtration Plant. ARTO was directed to explore the feasibility of Dooru Srinagar Bus Service as well as changing the timing of SRTC Buses for students in Kapran areas. ULB and Revenue authorities were asked to make field survey to provide parking space and public toilets in urban area. Addressing the gathering, the DDC assured that major issues would be taken up with the suitable authorities and emergent ones shall be resolved by the concerned departments in a time bound manner. For sustainable, inclusive and holistic development, it is imperative that people participate in planning process at grassroots level, he remarked.

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North in News

EDITORIAL

The Double-Edged Sword of Rainfall

Rainfall is a vital component of agriculture, and its impact on crops can be significant. While some argue that rains are a blessing in disguise, others believe that excessive or untimely rainfall can prove disastrous for crops. In this article, we'll explore both perspectives and examine the effects of rainfall on crops. On one hand, rainfall is essential for crop growth and development. Adequate water supply helps to nourish plants, replenish groundwater, and maintain soil health. In regions with scarce irrigation facilities, rainfall is often the primary source of water for crops. A good monsoon season can lead to bountiful harvests, improved crop yields, and increased farmer income. For instance, in India, a good monsoon season can boost agricultural GDP growth by 2-3%. Moreover, rainfall can also help to replenish water sources, reduce drought risk, and support biodiversity. However, excessive or untimely rainfall can have devastating effects on crops. Floods, waterlogging, and soil erosion can lead to crop damage, reduced yields, and even total crop failure. In 2020, excessive rainfall in Kerala, India, led to widespread flooding, affecting over 5 lakh hectares of agricultural land and causing losses worth 71,500 crore. Similarly, untimely rainfall can disrupt planting and harvesting schedules, leading to reduced crop quality and quantity. For example, if rains arrive too early, seeds may germinate prematurely, making them vulnerable to frost or pests. The impact of rainfall on crops also depends on factors like crop type, soil type, and regional climate. For instance, crops like rice and sugarcane require abundant water, while crops like wheat and pulses are more sensitive to excess moisture. Similarly, sandy soils may drain excess water quickly, while clay soils may retain water, leading to waterlogging. Climate change has further complicated the relationship between rainfall and crops. Erratic rainfall patterns, increased frequency of extreme weather events, and rising temperatures are affecting crop productivity and resilience. Farmers are facing new challenges, such as adapting to changing weather patterns, adopting climate-resilient crop varieties, and implementing sustainable agricultural practices. To mitigate the risks associated with rainfall, farmers can adopt strategies like crop diversification, soil conservation, and rainwater harvesting. Governments can also play a crucial role by providing climate-smart agricultural services, improving irrigation infrastructure, and offering crop insurance schemes.

In conclusion, rainfall can be both a blessing and a curse for crops, depending on the context and management practices. While adequate rainfall is essential for crop growth, excessive or untimely rainfall can have disastrous consequences. By adopting climate-resilient practices and leveraging technology, farmers can reduce risks and capitalize on the benefits of rainfall.

In the coming days, India will be immersed in a festive season, with celebrations taking place across the length and breadth of the nation. The people of Assam will mark Rongali Bihu while Odisha will celebrate Maha Bishuba Pana Sankranti. In West Bengal, Poila Boishakh will usher in the Bengali New Year and in Kerala, Vishu will be observed with immense enthusiasm. In Tamil Nadu, Puthandu will be celebrated while in Punjab and other parts of Northern India, it will be Baisakhi, which will usher in a spirit of hopes well as positivity. I convey my best wishes to all those across India and the world who are marking these festivals. May these auspicious occasions bring happiness and prosperity to everyone's lives. Furthermore, on the 11th of April, we will commence the 200th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Phule and on the 14th, India will pay homage to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar on Ambedkar Jayanti. In addition to these special occasions, when the spirit of renewal fills our hearts and minds, our nation stands at the threshold of another historic occasion. It is an opportunity to deepen the foundations of our democracy and to reaffirm our collective commitment to equality and inclusion. On the 16th of April, Parliament will be convened to discuss and pass an important bill that advances women's reservation. To describe this merely as a legislative exercise would be an understatement. It is a reflection of the aspirations of crores of women across India. It is an affirmation of a princi-

ple that has long guided our civilisational ethos, that society progresses when women progress. Women constitute nearly half of India's population. Their contributions to our nation are vast and invaluable. Today, India is witnessing remarkable achievements by women across every field. From science and technology to entrepreneurship, from sports to the armed forces and from music to the arts, women are at the forefront of India's progress. Over the years, sustained efforts have been made to create an enabling environment for women's empowerment. Greater access to education, improved healthcare, enhanced financial inclusion and better access to basic amenities have strengthened the foundations of women's participation in economic and social life. Yet, their representation in the world of politics and legislative bodies has not always been commensurate with their role in society. This is particularly unfortunate because when women participate in administration and decision-making, they bring with them experiences and insights that enrich public discourse and improve the quality of governance. It is imperative that the 2029 Lok Sabha elections and the Assembly elections to the various states in the coming times are conducted with women's reservation in place. Over the decades, there have been repeated efforts to provide women with their rightful place in democratic institutions by the previous governments. Committees were

made, bill drafts were introduced but they never saw the light of day. But the broad consensus has remained that women's representation in legislative bodies has to increase. In September 2023, Parliament passed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam with the same spirit of consensus. I consider it to be among the most special occasions of my life. This opportunity to ensure women's reservation also resonates deeply with the spirit of our Constitution. The makers of our Constitution, envisioned a society where equality is both enshrined and realised in practice. Strengthening women's participation in legislative institutions is an important step towards fulfilling that vision. It reflects our commitment to building a society where every citizen has an equal stake in shaping the nation's destiny. This is a moment that cannot be deferred any longer. Every delay in advancing women's representation is, in effect, a delay in strengthening the quality and inclusiveness of our democracy. For decades, the need for greater participation of women in legislative institutions has been acknowledged, discussed and reaffirmed. To postpone action now would mean extending an imbalance that we already recognise and have the capacity to correct. At a time when India is moving forward with confidence and purpose, it is essential that our institutions reflect the aspirations of all citizens, especially those who form half our population. Timely action will not only honour longstanding commitments but

also ensure that the momentum of progress is sustained. This is truly a historic opportunity to make our democracy more representative, responsive and future-ready. This moment calls for collective action.

It is not about any one government, party or individual. It is about the nation as a whole recognising the importance of this step and coming together to realise it. It is what we owe to our Nari Shakti. That is why the passage of a bill for women's reservation should reflect the broadest possible consensus and be guided by the larger national interest. Such opportunities call upon us to act not for ourselves, but for future generations. They remind us that the true strength of a democracy lies in its ability to evolve and to become more inclusive over time. As we approach this historic Parliament sitting, I appeal to all Members of Parliament, across party lines, to come together in support of this important step for the women of India. Let us seize this opportunity with a sense of responsibility and purpose. Let us act in a manner that reflects the highest traditions of our democracy. India has always shown that when it comes to matters of national importance, it can rise above differences and act with unity. This is one such moment. Let us move forward together and strengthen Constitutional values and empower our Nari Shakti for national progress.

India's First Digital Census Commenced



OMKAR DATTATRAY

It is historical, unprecedented and epoch-making that the digital census has commenced in India. This is no ordinary thing but a big significant and welcome development and all should cooperate with the field staff of the census department of GOI. Much talked about digital census began on first of April and it is the 16th census of independent India and much importance is attached to this census as economic policies and nations priorities are fundamentally based on the data of the census. In fact, India's first fully digital census [Census 2027] begins April 1, 2026, marking a shift from paper to mobile apps for real-time data collection. Over 30 lakh enumerators will use apps for the two-phase exercise [housing/population] featuring self-enumeration, GPS tagging and caste enumeration, aiming for higher accuracy and faster results.

Key Aspects of the First Digital Census--1--Timeline--The census commences with the House-listing Phase from April 1, 2026, to September 2026. The entire exercise is scheduled for completion in 2027. 2--Technology--Data will be collected via Android/iOS mobile applications. It will use GPS tag-

ging and allow for offline data capture. 3--Self-Enumeration--It is the new introduction in census operation as the people have to make self-enumeration in this respect the current census is different from the earlier censuses. For the first time, citizens can participate through a secure self-enumeration portal. 4--Caste & Socio-Economic Data--In addition to demographic data, it will include detailed, long-awaited caste enumeration, along with 34 columns of data on housing conditions and amenities. 5--Confidentiality--Data collected under the Census Act, 1948 is secure, cannot be accessed under RTI, and cannot be shared with other government agencies, ensuring privacy. 6--Phases--Phase 1 (April-Sept 2026) is the House-Listing and Housing Schedule. Phase 2 (Feb 2027) is the population Enumeration.

Significance--All Censuses are significant but the present census is all the more significant given the fact that it is first digital census and citizens are required to self-enumerate and in these respects the current census is somewhat distinct from earlier censuses. 1--Speed & Accuracy--Digital data collection removes the need for data digitization, drastically reducing time used for enumeration and data collection. 2--Data-Driven Governance--Provides immediate, high-quality data for designing welfare schemes. 3--Delimitation--Data will serve as the basis for the delimitation of electoral constituencies. A good share of Census 2027 data sets may be released in the same year, thanks to the capturing of data in digital mode right from the outset. Registrar General of India and census commissioner Mritunjay Kumar Narayan assured ahead of the launch of Census 2027, the world's largest and India's first-ever digital population data capture. "Earlier, census data was first collected on paper and then digitised making compilation a time-consuming process. Collection of data digitally will ensure 2027 database are out much

faster," he said. Appealing to the citizens to participate wholeheartedly in the census, Narayan asked them to furnish accurate information as census data is the key for shaping policy and socio-economic interventions. The first 15 days of 45-day house visit period are for self-enumeration. Registrar general and census commissioner Mritunjay Kumar Narayan also hoped a good percentage of people will opt for self-enumeration another first in the history of Indian census, via the dedicated portal that lists toolkits and FAOs to guide users through the process. The house listing operations [HLO] phase of the census, which will collect data on housing conditions and amenities, got under way on April first across eight states and UTs, including NDMC and cantonment areas. All states and UTs too, barring West Bengal have chosen separate HLO timelines between April and September. The first 15 days of the 45-day HLO period are exclusively for self-enumeration, another first in the history of the census. Over the next 30 days field visits will be undertaken by over 30 lakh enumerators. "We expect Bengal to also notify the HLO schedule soon," said Narayan. The HLO phase will be followed by population enumeration in Feb next year March 1, 2027 except for a few snow-bound areas. It is during the population enumeration phase that individual data fields like religion, fertility, socio-economic status, migration, and for the first time after 1951, caste will be captured. The questions for phase 2, which will include caste count, will be notified later said the RGI. Asked why National Population Register [NPR] updations have been delinked from census 2027, unlike the original plan for census 2021, and if this was on account of the special intensive Revision-SIR of the electoral rolls exercise, the RGI ruled out any correlation between the two. "TOI was the first to report on June 17, 2025, that NPR updating would not be undertaken alongside census 2027. Narayan assured that individual data recorded

during census 2027 will be kept strictly confidential, as mandated by the Census Act. "It cannot be shared by any government agency accessed under RTI or produced before the courts. Only aggregated statistical data will be used for tabulation purposes," he said. Census 2027 data will be collected through a mobile app and a web portal will monitor and manage various activities of census and house listing, while block creation will be done through a web mapping application. It is to be noted that no documents are to be collected by respondent's during census. RGI and census commissioner Narayan when asked about the likely methodology of capturing caste during the population enumeration phase of the census due in Feb next, said questions for the relevant phase were yet to be finalised.

"There are many suggestions on how to collect caste information. All those will be considered, and best shall be picked and questions framed and finalised accordingly," he said. Asked about the risk of respondents declaring a wrong caste to avail benefits of reservation, Narayan clarified that individual information collected during the census is not meant to be used for any purpose. "Only aggregate statistical information is made public. Individual data cannot be used to derive any benefit from any scheme," he said. To conclude, it can be said census 2027 promises faster data release with digital capture. This, will be India's first fully digital population counts. Citizens are urged to participate accurately. House-listing operations will begin April 1, followed by population enumeration in Feb 2027. Caste data will be collected for the first time since 1951. Individual data will remain confidential. One can say that it is no exaggeration to state that digital enumeration of data is in fact a revolution of the census operations.

The author is a columnist, social, KP & Freelancer activist

Regional Ayurveda Research Institute, Jammu, Marks World Health Day, Highlights Rising Lifestyle Diseases



Jammu, April 7: World Health Day was observed at the Regional Ayurveda Research Institute (RARI), Jammu, with a focus on creating awareness about the increasing burden of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, and hypertension.

An awareness lecture on Diabetes and Cardiovascular Health was delivered by Dr Harbans Singh, Research Officer In-Charge. The PowerPoint presentation was assisted by Dr Sanjana Sharma (S.R.F. Ay.), who contributed to explaining the growing prevalence of these conditions, their risk factors, and associated complications. The speakers emphasised the role of unhealthy dietary habits, sedentary lifestyle, and stress in the rising incidence of such diseases. Preventive strategies, including a balanced diet, regular physical activity, and stress management, were highlighted as key measures for maintaining good health. Hypertension, often described as a "silent killer," was also discussed during the session. Its causes, lack of early symptoms, and potential complications such as heart disease, stroke, and kidney damage were explained. The importance of regular blood pressure monitoring and timely intervention was stressed. Dr Harbans Singh further underlined the need for an integrative approach combining Ayurvedic principles with modern medical practices for effective prevention and management of chronic diseases. The programme concluded with an interactive session, wherein participants actively took part and gained valuable insights into adopting a healthier lifestyle.

Parkash Utsav of Guru Nabha Dass Maharaj celebrated in Kathua



Kathua: The Parkash Utsav of Goswami Guru Nabha Dass Ji Maharaj was celebrated with religious fervor in Kathua today. M.A.A. Kathua, Dr. Bharat Bhushan was the Chief Guest on the occasion. The other prominent persons present on the occasion included Duni Chand Sagotra former District & Sessions Judge, Rajinder Kumar Digra, District Information Officer Kathua, Punjab Chand former Deputy Secretary, Dr. Shiv Kumar, former Deputy Director, Textation Advocate Sushil Gupta, President Brick Klin Association Kathua Shyam Narayan Mehta besides a large number of devotees were present on the occasion. President of Guru Nabha Dass Ji Mandir Committee Kathua & former Sarpanch Mohan Lal welcomed the Chief Guest and other people. The programme started with Havan Yajna in the morning and the Guru Nabha Dass Kirtan Mandli sang Bhajans on the occasion. The floral tributes were paid to Guru ji. The speakers highlighted the teachings of Guru ji on the occasion. Dr. Bharat Bhushan MLA Kathua while paying tributes exhorted the devotees to follow the path of universal brotherhood, amity and harmony shown by Guru ji through Granth Baktmaal which has description of the contribution of over 200 saints of 15th and 16th century. He said that teachings of our Saints are ever so relevant in the present times when there is turmoil in the world. Later Bhandara was also served to the devotees.

J&K POLICE KATHUA STRIKED HARD AGAINST VEHICLE LIFTERS, 09 MOTORCYCLES RECOVERED & 02 THIEVES ARRESTED.

KATHUA: 08 APRIL:- In continuation to a drive launched by J&K Police Kathua against the thieves/vehicle lifters operating in this district Kathua Police under the overall supervision of SSP Kathua Ms. Mohita Sharma-IPS has solved a theft case, arrested two thieves and recovered a total of 09 motorcycles from their possession. On 03/04/2026 a complaint was received at PS Kathua through the complainant namely Devinder Kumar S/o Ramesh Chander R/o Chhapki Kalan Tehsil Hiranagar District Kathua regarding theft of his motorcycle bearing Reg. No. JK08G-3139 which was parked near AK Gupta Hospital had been stolen by unknown thieves, for which a case vide FIR No. 165/2025 U/S 303(2) BNS registered at PS Kathua. Following a thorough investigation, the police team led by Insp. Ashish Sharma SHO PS Kathua under the close supervision of Addl. SP Kathua Sh. Sunil Kumar Kesar and DySP Hqrs Kathua Sh. Ravinder Singh arrested two suspects namely:-1. Dwaraka Prasad S/o Khem Raj R/o Dhaloti, Tehsil Marheen. Rajbagh Kathua.2. Keshav Sharma S/o Vijay Kumar R/o Mirpur Dhaloti Tehsil Marheen Rajbagh. Upon interrogation, the accused person confessed their involvement in the commission of crime and the police team was able to recover 01 motorcycle bearing Reg. No. JK08G-3139 from their possession. Apart from this 08 other motorcycles have also been recovered from their possession which were also presumed to be stolen and seized U/S 106/BNS. Kathua Police is striving hard and taking every possible step, especially in solving the cases within the district. If any person has any information regarding any such illicit activity then share it by dialing 112 or 9858034100 with police for the cause. We assured your identity shall be kept confidential.

DIG Udhampur-Reasi Range Sh Shiv Kumar Sharma IPS, Held Introductory Meeting with GOC in Chief Northern Command

Udhampur, 8 April 2026. DIG Udhampur-Reasi Range, called on the General Officer Commanding in Chief, Northern Command at the Northern Command Headquarters, Udhampur. The meeting marked an important step in strengthening coordination between the Police and the Indian Army in the region. During the interaction, both officers discussed matters related to security cooperation, operational synergy and continued collaboration to ensure peace and stability in the area. The GOC in Chief acknowledged the efforts of DIG in maintaining law and order and fostering inter-agency cooperation. In recognition of his distinguished service, the Army Commander felicitated the DIG with the prestigious 'Operation Sindoor Medal'. The meeting concluded with a reaffirmed commitment to enhance joint efforts for the safety and security of the people of Udhampur and Reasi Range.



Government of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER KISHTWAR

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby informed to the general public and all vehicle owners (commercial/non-commercial) that this office has received a list of traffic violators from higher authorities who have been booked more than five (05) times for offences falling under the Hon'ble Supreme Court Committee guidelines, including non-wearing of helmets, non-use of seat belts, overloading, overspeeding, drunken driving, and use of mobile phones while driving. (Copy enclosed, Annexure-A)

In compliance with directions issued vide letter No. TC/JK/Estu/2026/5026-50 dated 01-04-2026, action for suspension of Registration Certificates (RCs), Route Permits (RPs), and Driving Licences (DLs) has been initiated. All concerned vehicle owners are, therefore, directed to show cause within 07 days as to why their Registration Certificates (RCs), Route Permits (RPs), and Driving Licences (DLs) should not be cancelled or suspended. They are also directed to clear all pending challans, if any. Failure to comply within the stipulated period shall invite strict action under the Motor Vehicles Act/Rules, including suspension of Registration Certificates, Route Permits, and Driving Licences.

No.: ARTO/KTR/2026-27/125-28
Dated: 06-04-2026

Sd
Assistant Regional Transport Officer
Kishtwar

DIP/J-287/26

Annexure-A								
S.No	Reg.No	Vehicle Class	S.No	Reg.No	Vehicle Class	S.No	Reg.No	Vehicle Class
1	JK170012	LMV Car	46	JK177515	M-Cycle	91	JK17A1733	Moped
2	JK170850	Maxi Cab	47	JK177620	Taxi-Maxi Cab	92	JK17A1744	Moped
3	JK172937	M-Cycle	48	JK177727	M-Cycle	93	JK17A1844	Moped
4	JK173688	M-Cycle	49	JK177760	LMV Car	94	JK17A1910	M-Cycle
5	JK173752	Taxi-Maxi Cab	50	JK177794	LMV Car	95	JK17A1950	Goods Carrier
6	JK173930	M-Cycle	51	JK177845	Moped	96	JK17A1960	M-Cycle
7	JK174421	Taxi-Maxi Cab	52	JK178143	M-Cycle	97	JK17A1983	Moped
8	JK174513	Taxi-Maxi Cab	53	JK178159	LMV Car	98	JK17A2127	LMV Car
9	JK174547	Taxi-Maxi Cab	54	JK178162	Moped	99	JK17A2215	Moped
10	JK174895	Taxi-Maxi Cab	55	JK178300	M-Cycle	100	JK17A2260	Moped
11	JK175035	Moped	56	JK178713	LMV Car	101	JK17A2296	Goods Carrier
12	JK175114	Taxi-Maxi Cab	57	JK178720	Moped	102	JK17A2303	M-Cycle
13	JK175183	Goods Carrier	58	JK178900	Moped	103	JK17A2346	M-Cycle
14	JK175202	LMV Car	59	JK178913	Moped	104	JK17A2395	M-Cycle
15	JK175292	Moped	60	JK178934	LMV Car	105	JK17A2429	Moped
16	JK175310	M-Cycle	61	JK179031	Taxi-Maxi Cab	106	JK17A2459	M-Cycle
18	JK175619	M-Cycle	63	JK179238	Moped	108	JK17A2563	Moped
19	JK175627	Moped	64	JK179329	Taxi-Maxi Cab	109	JK17A2578	M-Cycle
20	JK175630	M-Cycle	65	JK179330	Goods Carrier	110	JK17A2629	Goods Carrier
21	JK175704	Moped	66	JK179338	M-Cycle	111	JK17A2730	M-Cycle
22	JK175708	M-Cycle	67	JK179370	Moped	112	JK17A2769	M-Cycle
23	JK175810	M-Cycle	68	JK179592	Moped	113	JK17A2790	M-Cycle
24	JK176068	Moped	69	JK179709	M-Cycle	114	JK17A2818	Moped
25	JK176069	LMV Car	70	JK179925	LMV Car	115	JK17A2825	Moped
26	JK176127	M-Cycle	71	JK17A0099	M-Cycle	116	JK17A2844	M-Cycle
27	JK176164	Moped	72	JK17A0264	Goods Carrier	117	JK17A2885	Moped
28	JK176167	Moped	73	JK17A0358	LMV Car	118	JK17A2980	Goods Carrier
29	JK176175	M-Cycle	74	JK17A0492	LMV Car	119	JK17A3076	M-Cycle
30	JK176327	Moped	75	JK17A0609	LMV Car	120	JK17A3100	Moped
31	JK176339	M-Cycle	76	JK17A0741	Moped	121	JK17A3184	M-Cycle
32	JK176404	Taxi-Maxi Cab	77	JK17A0743	Moped	122	JK17A3205	Moped
33	JK176470	Moped	78	JK17A0979	M-Cycle	123	JK17A3410	M-Cycle
34	JK176568	Moped	79	JK17A1149	Goods Carrier	124	JK17A3444	M-Cycle
35	JK176819	M-Cycle	80	JK17A1183	Moped	125	JK17A3471	Moped
36	JK176972	M-Cycle	81	JK17A1248	M-Cycle	126	JK17A3482	Moped
37	JK176991	M-Cycle	82	JK17A1264	Taxi-Maxi Cab	127	JK17A3547	Moped
38	JK177037	M-Cycle	83	JK17A1342	M-Cycle	128	JK17A3585	Goods Carrier
39	JK177143	Moped	84	JK17A1423	M-Cycle	129	JK17A3878	M-Cycle
40	JK177202	M-Cycle	85	JK17A1451	Goods Carrier	130	JK17A3946	M-Cycle
41	JK177246	M-Cycle	86	JK17A1461	Taxi-Maxi Cab	131	JK17A4005	Moped
42	JK177303	M-Cycle	87	JK17A1537	M-Cycle	132	JK17A4015	Goods Carrier
43	JK177342	M-Cycle	88	JK17A1540	Moped	133	JK17A4067	Moped
44	JK177429	Goods Carrier	89	JK17A1581	LMV Car	134	JK17A4080	Goods Carrier
45	JK177503	M-Cycle	90	JK17A1647	M-Cycle	135	JK17A4094	LMV Car

136	JK17A4105	Moped	181	JK17A6221	Moped	226	JK17A8795	M-Cycle
137	JK17A4272	Moped	182	JK17A6401	Moped	227	JK17A8808	Taxi-Maxi Cab
138	JK17A4324	Moped	183	JK17A6416	LMV Car	228	JK17A8893	Moped
139	JK17A4327	M-Cycle	184	JK17A6422	Moped	229	JK17A8969	M-Cycle
140	JK17A4398	M-Cycle	185	JK17A6447	Moped	230	JK17A9001	Moped
141	JK17A4479	M-Cycle	186	JK17A6456	Moped	231	JK17A9003	Moped
142	JK17A4555	M-Cycle	187	JK17A6516	M-Cycle	232	JK17A9068	Moped
143	JK17A4574	M-Cycle	188	JK17A6616	M-Cycle	233	JK17A9118	M-Cycle
144	JK17A4621	M-Cycle	189	JK17A6627	Moped	234	JK17A9240	M-Cycle
145	JK17A4623	Moped	190	JK17A6634	M-Cycle	235	JK17A9281	Moped
146	JK17A4636	Goods Carrier	191	JK17A6698	M-Cycle	236	JK17A9478	Taxi-Maxi Cab
147	JK17A4638	Goods Carrier	192	JK17A6704	Goods Carrier	237	JK17A9656	M-Cycle
148	JK17A4642	Goods Carrier	193	JK17A6710	Taxi-Maxi Cab	238	JK17A9662	Taxi-Maxi Cab
149	JK17A4683	M-Cycle	194	JK17A6718	Taxi-Maxi Cab	239	JK17A9675	Goods Carrier
150	JK17A4701	M-Cycle	195	JK17A6755	Taxi-Maxi Cab	240	JK17A9687	Moped
151	JK17A4725	M-Cycle	196	JK17A6764	Moped	241	JK17A9764	Taxi-Maxi Cab
152	JK17A4784	LMV Car	197	JK17A6777	LMV Car	242	JK17A9907	LMV Car
153	JK17A4787	Moped	198	JK17A6796	M-Cycle	243	JK17A9951	M-Cycle
154	JK17A4838	Taxi-Maxi Cab	199	JK17A6942	Taxi-Maxi Cab	244	JK17B0252	Moped
155	JK17A4850	Moped	200	JK17A6945	Taxi-Maxi Cab	245	JK17B1243	Moped
156	JK17A4883	LMV Car	201	JK17A6949	M-Cycle	246	JK17B1268	Moped
157	JK17A4901	Moped	202	JK17A6985	M-Cycle			
158	JK17A4951	LMV Car	203	JK17A6988	M-Cycle			
159	JK17A4996	Moped	204	JK17A7087	Moped			
160	JK17A5036	Moped	205	JK17A7116	Taxi-Maxi Cab			
161	JK17A5086	Moped	206	JK17A7204	Taxi-Maxi Cab			
162	JK17A5149	Moped	207	JK17A7265	M-Cycle			
163	JK17A5209	Goods Carrier	208	JK17A7330	M-Cycle			
164	JK17A5247	M-Cycle	209	JK17A7450	M-Cycle			
165	JK17A5389	Goods Carrier	210	JK17A7533	M-Cycle			
166	JK17A5472	Moped	211	JK17A7534	M-Cycle			
167	JK17A5477	M-Cycle	212	JK17A7552	Moped			
168	JK17A5543	Moped	213	JK17A7591	Taxi-Maxi Cab			
169	JK17A5587	M-Cycle	214	JK17A7757	Moped			
170	JK17A5589	Goods Carrier	215	JK17A7790	Taxi-Maxi Cab			
171	JK17A5660	Moped	216	JK17A7917	Moped			
172	JK17A5662	Moped	217	JK17A7928	Taxi-Maxi Cab			
173	JK17A5813	Adopted/Moped	218	JK17A7956	M-Cycle			
174	JK17A5936	M-Cycle	219	JK17A7957	Taxi-Maxi Cab			
175	JK17A5944	Adopted/Moped	220	JK17A8231	M-Cycle			
176	JK17A6052	Moped	221	JK17A8358	Goods Carrier			
177	JK17A6054	M-Cycle	222	JK17A8371	Moped			
178	JK17A6095	Moped	223	JK17A8460	M-Cycle			
179	JK17A6105	Goods Carrier	224	JK17A8593	Goods Carrier			
180	JK17A6200	LMV Car	225	JK17A8646	Moped			

S/d

Asstt. RTO Kishtwar

Struggling KKR eye turnaround against confident LSG

New Delhi, Apr 8: Out of tune and still searching for answers, three-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) will be desperate to reset their campaign when they take on Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in their Indian Premier League clash at Eden Gardens here on Thursday, hoping home conditions can finally spark a turnaround. After three games without a win, KKR find themselves at a crossroads early in the season. Their previous outing against Punjab Kings summed up their struggles, reduced to 16/2 inside two overs before rain intervened to hand them a solitary point. It was a narrow escape, but also a timely reminder of the fragility that has crept into their batting. The immediate challenge will be handling a resurgent Lucknow attack led by Mohammed Shami. The experienced pacer is coming off a superb spell against Sunrisers Hyderabad, where he removed Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head in quick succession, the two batters who had taken KKR apart not long ago. Back in familiar surroundings at Eden Gardens, Shami's ability to seam the ball and hit disciplined lengths could pose a serious threat in the powerplay. KKR have already had a taste of what to expect. Punjab



Kings' Xavier Bartlett exploited similar conditions earlier this week, using movement off a grassy surface to dismantle their top order. If KKR are to avoid another early collapse, their batters will need to quickly adjust to the pace and bounce on offer. The opening combination remains a key area of concern. Ajinkya Rahane and Finn Allen have shown glimpses but lacked consistency, and a reshuffle could be on the cards. Bringing in Tim Seifert to partner Allen again is one option, while Rachin Ravindra's inclusion in the middle order could add both stability and an extra spin option. KKR's problems are not limited to the batting alone. Their bowling unit, traditionally a strength, has struggled to make an impact. Sunil Narine has

managed just one wicket in two games, while Varun Chakravarthy is yet to open his account this season. Both missed the last game and could return, which would provide a much-needed boost. The team may also consider giving a longer run to emerging mystery spinner Daksh Kamra. Their costliest signing, Cameron Green, has yet to justify his hefty price tag. With scores of 18, 2 and 4 and no overs bowled so far due to workload management, the Australian all-rounder is still searching for rhythm. KKR have continued to back him, though Rovman Powell's inclusion in the last game suggests they are exploring alternatives. Weather has hovered over the build-up, with persistent rain in the region over the past few days, but the late evening start

should allow for a full contest. Lucknow Super Giants, meanwhile, arrive with confidence after their recent win, powered by Rishabh Pant's composed unbeaten 68. With Mitchell Marsh and Aiden Markram also in their top order, KKR's bowlers will need to find answers quickly. Squads KKR: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Manish Pandey, Rovman Powell, Sunil Narine, Rameshwar Singh, Anukul Roy, Varun Chakravarthy, Vaibhav Arora, Umran Malik, Cameron Green, Finn Allen, Matheesha Pathirana, Tejasvi Singh, Kartik Tyagi, Prashant Solanki, Rahul Tripathi, Tim Seifert, Sarthak Ranjan, Daksh Kamra, Rachin Ravindra. Blessing Muzarabani, Saurabh Dubey and Navdeep Saini LSG: Rishabh Pant (c), Mitchell Marsh, Aiden Markram, Himmat Singh, Matthew Breetzke, Mukul Choudhary, Akshat Raghuvanshi, Josh Inglis, Nicholas Pooran, Abdul Samad, Shahbaz Ahmad, Arshin Kulkarni, Ayush Badoni, Mohammed Shami, Avesh Khan, M. Siddharth, Digvesh Singh, Akash Singh, Prince Yadav, Arjun Tendulkar, Anrich Nortje, Naman Tiwari, Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan.

Pandya blames bowlers after MI's 27-run loss to Royals

Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya admitted his side's bowling unit fell short after suffering a 27-run defeat to Rajasthan Royals in a rain-curtailed 11-overs-a-side IPL 2026 clash at the ACA Stadium here on Tuesday. Back in charge after missing the previous game, Pandya opted to field first, but the decision did not go according to plan as Rajasthan's openers dominated from the outset. Yashasvi Jaiswal slammed an unbeaten 77 off 32 balls while teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi smashed 39 off just 14 deliveries, powering Royals to a commanding 150/3. The damage was inflicted early, with the duo piling on 56 runs inside the shortened Power-play of 3.2 overs, leaving Mumbai chasing the game for the remainder of the contest. In reply, Mumbai Indians never really recovered from a shaky start. Their top order crumbled under pressure, slipping to 46/5 before eventually finishing on 123/9, well short of the steep target on the loss. Pandya was clear in his assessment, pointing to the bowlers' inability to execute plans effectively in the early overs. "We did not execute the deliveries we were supposed to. They (RR openers) played well. Bowlers need to take responsibility. As a bowling group, we were not up to the mark. They (RR openers) also played tremendously," he said during the post-match presentation. Pandya, however, chose not to criticise his batting unit, instead reiterating that the game had slipped away primarily due to the bowling performance.



"I would not put the blame on batting. Definitely the bowling unit, which had to take responsibility. It is always about bowling those good balls. If we had executed, we would have been in the game. Their openers threw us off our game, and we were playing catch-up," he said. The Mumbai skipper also reserved special praise for young Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, who impressed with his fearless approach at the top. "Quite fascinating to see a 17- or 16-year-old boy (15-year-old) play that way. Amazing to see the way he bats, the fearlessness he has. Wish him good luck for the future." Despite the setback, Pandya maintained a positive outlook, emphasising the need for the team to regroup and learn from their mistakes as the tournament progresses. "Just learn from the mistakes. Morning will come tomorrow, the sun will rise, prepare well for the next game," he said.

Badminton Asia c'ships: Sindhu, Shetty, Prannoy advance, Lakshya, Kidambi exit

New Delhi, Apr 8: Two-time Olympic medallist P. V. Sindhu and men's singles stars Ayush Shetty and H. S. Prannoy kept India's campaign on track, while Lakshya Sen and Kidambi Srikanth exited early as Indian shuttlers experienced a mixed outing on the opening day of the Badminton Asia Championships on Wednesday. Sindhu was pushed hard by Malaysia's Wong Ling Ching before coming through a gruelling three-game contest. After conceding the first game 15-21, the Hyderabad-based player found her rhythm to take the second 21-11. The decider proved to be a closely fought affair, with both players trading points in a tense finish. Locked at 19-19, Sindhu held her nerve to win back-to-back points and close out the match in one hour and seven minutes. She will next face China's Wang Zhi Yi in the second round. One of the biggest positives for India came in the form of promising Ayush Shetty, who produced a stunning upset by defeating China's world No. 7 Li Shi Feng in straight games. The youngster's composed performance secured him a place in the pre-quarterfinals, where he will take on Chinese



Taipei's Chi Yu Jen for a spot in the last eight. Prannoy, meanwhile, battled his way into the next round with a 24-22, 21-12 victory over Vietnam's Nguyen Hai Dang. The opening game was a tight contest, with Prannoy saving multiple game points before edging ahead 24-22. He then took control in the second game, maintaining pressure to wrap up the match comfortably. He is set to face China's Weng

Hong Yang next. In contrast, Lakshya Sen's campaign ended in the opening round following a straight-game loss to Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu. Coming into the tournament with some momentum after a solid run at the All England Championships, Lakshya struggled to find consistency, going down 12-21, 19-21 in a 41-minute match. While he showed improvement in the second game.

Mohammad Shami Makes Big Remark Amid Selection Debate: 'Hum Mazdoor Aadmi Hain'

Fresh from his match-winning performance against Sunrisers Hyderabad, Lucknow Super Giants pacer Mohammad Shami returns to his 'home' ground, Eden Gardens, to face Kolkata Knight Riders, sounding a quiet warning to the opposition. Winless after three matches, embattled Kolkata Knight Riders take on Lucknow Super Giants on Thursday, their third home game in a row. "You always have that home advantage playing at Eden Gardens," Shami said on Tuesday, speaking alongside Kolkata Knight Riders skipper Ajinkya Rahane and his deputy Rinku Singh at the unveiling of third season of Bengal Pro T20 League. "You understand the conditions, the pitch behaviour because you've played there for a long time and spent a lot of time on that ground. So that benefit is always there. If I come here and play against KKR,



there will be some advantage for me being a local." The fast bowler produced a stunning 2/9, including 18 dot balls, as the Rishabh Pant-led side secured their first win of the season, defeating Sunrisers Hyderabad by five wickets in their previous match in Hyderabad. Despite his consistent performances for Bengal following his return from injury, Shami has remained out of the

national team. He was among the top six wicket takers in the recently concluded Ranji Trophy, claiming 37 scalps at an impressive average of 16.72. Shami also played a key role in Bengal's run to the semifinals, including a standout performance of 8/90, though the team eventually lost to champions Jammu and Kashmir after taking a first-innings lead. "Hum mazdoor aadmi hain, humein bas dal baani hai (we are like labourers, we just have to keep bowling)," Shami quipped. "There will be ups and downs in life -- injuries and all -- but you should never forget your ground-level hard work. If you chase too many 'fancy things', that becomes your weakness. Nowadays everyone is after social media." The Uttar Pradesh-born pacer reiterated his deep connection with Bengal, calling it his

Controversy Hits Bangladesh Cricket As Government Probe Makes Big Revelation

The Bangladesh government's investigation committee has uncovered evidence of vote-rigging, bias, and coercion in the October 2025 Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) elections. The five-member panel, led by former justice AKM Asaduzzaman, submitted its findings to the sports ministry on Sunday, as per ESPNcricinfo. The committee reported a lack of cooperation from BCB's top officials on multiple occasions. Former BCB president Aminul Islam said in a recent interview that he did not participate in a face-to-face meeting with the panel, opting instead to submit a written response. Despite this, the committee found that both BCB officials and individuals within the sports ministry have been involved in irregularities during the

election process. Mohammed Aminul Ahesan, the NSC sports director, read out the government's report at a press conference on Tuesday afternoon. "The election process was not free, fair or transparent. Voters were intimidated, and procedural irregularities were rampant." Ahesan stated that the government has sufficient grounds to dissolve the Aminul-led BCB board. Concluding his press briefing, he announced the 11 members of a new ad hoc committee that will oversee the BCB for the next three months. Tamim Iqbal, the former Bangladesh captain, who had accused Aminul of abusing his authority as BCB president just four weeks before last year's election, has been appointed as the new BCB pres-

ident. "On March 10, 2026, Mr Shariful Alam and other former councillors made a complaint about the district and division sports associations. The subject of the complaint was the deadline for submitting councillors' names from this category. The concerned authorities were sent letters on September 1 and 2 that the submission deadline would be September 17. The BCB extended this deadline to September 19 and then to September 22. The committee felt that this deadline was extended without proper reason and for ulterior motives, to replace the previously nominated councillors with preferred individuals and create opportunities for them." "I would like to be elected as directors," Ahesan said.

Savita Punia returns as India name squad for Argentina tour

New Delhi, Apr 8: Star goalkeeper Savita Punia headlines the returnees as Hockey India named a 24-member Indian women's squad for the upcoming tour of Argentina, scheduled to be held in Buenos Aires from April 13 to 17.

The four-match exposure series against a top Argentine side comes at a crucial juncture for India, with the FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 and the Asian Games on the horizon. The tour is expected to play a key role in shaping combinations and building match readiness ahead of a packed international calendar. The squad reflects a blend of experience and youth, underlining the steady progress of Indian women's hockey and the expectations placed on the group by head coach Sjoerd Marjine. For the players, the series presents an important opportunity to stake their claim in a competitive setup. Midfielder Salima Tete continues as captain, bringing leadership, composure and energy to the side. One of the major talking points, however, is the return of forward Deepika, who rejoins the squad after a period of rehabilitation. Her comeback strengthens India's drag-flicking department significantly ahead of a demanding season. In Deepika's absence, players



such as Navneet Kaur, Manisha Chauhan, Uditia and Annu stepped up impressively, with Annu particularly catching the eye with her drag-flicking abilities during the qualifiers. With Deepika back, the team gains added balance and depth in attack. Kaur, in particular, has grown into a key figure over the past year and is expected to play a central role in India's plans going forward. Savita's return between the posts adds immense experience and stability to the defensive unit. One of India's most accomplished goalkeepers, her presence will be vital against a strong Argentine attack. During her absence in the qualifiers, Bichu Devi impressed with her composure and sharp reflexes, ensuring

healthy competition in the goal-keeping department. The squad also sees the return of defender Jyoti and forward Mumtaz Khan, both of whom missed the qualifiers, further strengthening the team. Among the consistent performers, Baljeet Kaur has stood out, establishing herself as a reliable goal-scoring option. Midfielder Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke has also impressed with her energy, control and forward movement, making her a key presence in the middle of the park. Young talents Rutuja Dasdo Pisal, Ishika and Sakshi Rana continue to be players to watch. Their development and exposure against a top side like Argentina will be closely monitored.

Anant Ambani offers prayers at Guruvayur Temple, backs restoration and unveils elephant care facilities

New Delhi, Apr 8: The revered temple town of Guruvayur in Kerala witnessed a significant moment when Anant Ambani arrived at the Guruvayur Temple to offer prayers. Along with worship, he contributed 76 crore as temple donations and also committed 12 crore for the restoration of the East Gopuram at the Rajarajeshwaram Temple. Temple officials received him with traditional customs. Among those present were Devaswam President TP Vinod Kumar, Executive Officer KP Vinayan, and Chief Priest EP Kuberan Namboothiri, along with members of the Devaswam Namboothiri. The reception followed established temple protocol. He



then participated in rituals that included offerings such as Ponnunkudam, Pattam, Thali, Neyyamrutu. He also performed Ashwamedha Namaskaram, a ceremonial act linked to long-standing temple traditions. The visit was not limited to religious rituals. During the same trip, he outlined a plan focused on elephant welfare connected to the

temple. The proposal includes setting up a dedicated elephant hospital, developing a chain-free shelter and creating facilities designed around humane care. The aim, according to the announcement, is to improve conditions for temple elephants through structured veterinary attention and modern care systems. The initiative is tied

to ongoing work under Vantara, which has been associated with wildlife rescue and rehabilitation projects. The elephant welfare plan highlights infrastructure as well as long-term management. Hospital is expected to address medical needs. Shelter concept focuses on reducing restrictions on animals. Additional facilities are proposed for monitoring, treatment, overall welfare by combining traditional temple practices with structured animal care methods. Speaking on the occasion, he emphasised that India's spiritual traditions are living institutions that nurture community, compassion, and a profound connection with nature. "India's spiritual

traditions are not merely places of worship, they are living institutions that nurture faith, community, compassion, and our deep connection with nature. It is our collective responsibility to preserve and strengthen this sacred heritage for future generations. Through these initiatives, and through our work at Vantara, we seek to serve with humility, by enhancing the experience of devotees, while ensuring that the animals who are an integral part of our traditions are cared for with the utmost dignity, compassion, and scientific attention." The announcements came alongside the financial contributions already made to the temples.

Kharge regrets 'illiterate Gujaratis' remark after BJP roar, but says it was 'deliberately misinterpreted'

New Delhi, Apr 8:

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday said he regrets his recent remarks made during a rally in Kerala, after they drew sharp criticism from the BJP and leaders in Gujarat. He maintained that his comments had been misunderstood and were never meant to offend people in the state. The controversy erupted after a speech in Idukki, where Kharge contrasted Kerala voters as "educated and clever" and said they could not be misled, unlike "those who are illiterate in Gujarat or other places". The remarks quickly triggered a backlash, with critics calling them insulting and elitist.



Posting on X, Kharge said some parts of his speech were being "deliberately misinterpreted". He added that he has always respected the people of Gujarat and did not intend to hurt their sentiments. "Some remarks of mine in a recent election speech in Kerala are being deliberately misinterpreted. Even so, I express my sincere regret. It was never my intention to hurt the sentiments of the people of Gujarat for whom I have always had and will continue to have the highest of

respect." BJP leaders attack remarks, call them insulting to Gujarat. The issue soon escalated politically, with senior BJP leaders condemning the statement. Home Minister Amit Shah criticised the Congress chief at a rally in Assam, saying the people of Gujarat would respond to such comments. He pointed out that Gujarat is the birthplace of figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

EC prepared for free, fair and peaceful assembly elections in Assam

New Delhi, Apr 8:

The Election Commission (EC) has stated that it is fully prepared to conduct polling for the General Election to the Assam Legislative Assembly, 2026, in a free, fair, and peaceful manner, with voting across all 126 assembly constituencies scheduled to be held in a single phase on April 9. According to the press release by the EC, under the leadership of the Chief Electoral Officer of Assam, Anurag Goel, all concerned are carrying out their responsibilities with utmost diligence. To ensure strict monitoring of all aspects, including law and order and election expenditure, the EC has already deployed central



observers. In addition, under the SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) programme, extensive awareness campaigns have been undertaken to encourage greater voter participation across the State. To strengthen the monitoring mechanism, webcasting facilities have been arranged in accordance with the

Commission's directions. Webcasting has been enabled in all 31,490 polling stations, including 31,486 main polling stations and 4 auxiliary polling stations. This will allow real-time monitoring of polling processes from the offices of the District Election Officers, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Election Commission of India. Further, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), including CRPF personnel, have been deployed to ensure security at polling stations. Micro-observers are also deputed in the sensitive polling stations to ensure smooth conduct of polling, the release stated.

Assam, Kerala, Puducherry—fierce fights for political survival, also among allies

New Delhi, Apr 8:

Public campaigning for the April 9 Assembly elections in Kerala, Assam and Puducherry concluded on Tuesday, setting the stage for polling across 126 seats in Assam, 140 in Kerala and 30 in Puducherry. Bye-elections will also be held to five seats across Goa, Karnataka, Nagaland and Tripura. According to the Election Commission, a total of 1,955 candidates are in the fray—Assam accounts for 722 candidates, Kerala 890 and Puducherry 294. An additional 49 candidates are contesting the bypolls—three in Goa, 34 in Karnataka and six each in Nagaland and Tripura.



It is a fight for political survival and relevance and a key trend in these elections has been the rise of competitive and multi-cornered contests. For example in Kerala, the incumbent Left Democratic Front (LDF), led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, is seeking a third consecutive

to the Kerala' contest. The growing saffron presence in states like Kerala and its consolidation in Assam indicate that electoral battles are becoming less predictable, say observers. The campaigns for these elections also highlighted the increasing role of strong, individual leaders. In Assam, for instance, the contest became highly personalised, reflecting a shift toward leader-driven politics where personalities can influence voter perception as much as a party's ideology. BJP's Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma led an aggressive campaign against Congress' Gaurav Gogoi, in a bid for second

term for himself and a third for the BJP-led NDA, with a campaign centred around a mix of Hinduva, indigenous identity politics, allegations of illegal immigration, and welfare measures, especially women and tea garden worker. Amid the political rhetoric around role of strong, individual leaders, the Assam elections were also marked by highly personalised attacks between Sarma and Gogoi with the BJP and the Congress trading allegations against each other. The parties combined welfare promises with identity-based appeals, blending development narratives with issues such as religion, ethnicity.

'Uttarakhand will lead the change against BJP': Congress' Harish Rawat

New Delhi, Apr 8:

Former Uttarakhand Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Harish Rawat on Wednesday asserted that the Congress in Uttarakhand is at a crucial stage of ushering in political change, expressing confidence that the state could take the lead in mounting a challenge against the BJP. He also said he had noted similar shifts are underway in Kerala and Assam. Speaking to ANI, Rawat said, "Uttarakhand will lead the change. Change is coming in Kerala as well, but the fortune of leading the change against the BJP is going to be counted, or it might go to Assam. Uttarakhand Congress is at a stage of bringing about change." The assembly elections in West Bengal will be conducted in two phases on April 23 and April 29, while Kerala and Assam will vote in a single phase on April 9. Tamil



Nadu will go to the polls on April 23, and voting in Puducherry will also be held on April 9. Counting of votes in all four states and Puducherry will be done on May 4, the CEC announced. Meanwhile, a day earlier, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami chaired a high-level meeting at the Chief Minister's residence to review preparations for the pro-

posed visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Uttarakhand on April 14. The Prime Minister is slated to inaugurate the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway during the visit. The Chief Minister directed all departments to work in close coordination. He emphasised ensuring participation from every section of society so that the event takes the form of a grand public

celebration. The Chief Minister instructed officials to design the program in an attractive and well-organised manner. He stressed that cultural performances should be held on a grand scale, showcasing Uttarakhand's rich cultural heritage, including Garhwali, Kumaoni, and Jaunsari folk dances and music. "The venue should reflect a blend of traditional and modern decor, with wide participation from artists," said CM. He noted that the event should not remain merely a government function but should represent the culture, traditions, and pride of Uttarakhand. Chief Minister Dhami also appealed to the people to actively participate in this historic occasion. He encouraged citizens to come out of their homes with the national flag and join the Prime Minister's roadshow, creating a festive atmosphere across the state.

'Irresponsible': Vaiko slams EPS over 'House Arrest' remark on Stalin's father

New Delhi, Apr 8:

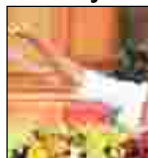
Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) founder and General Secretary Vaiko lashed out at All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) General Secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami over his remarks alleging that Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had kept his father, the late M. Karunanidhi, under "house arrest" during his final days. Speaking to ANI on Tuesday, Vaiko termed the statement "irresponsible" and "baseless" and said that such rhetoric does not suit the stature of a former Chief Minister. "Edappadi K. Palaniswami (EPS) has gone beyond his limits. He is speaking irresponsibly. This is a baseless statement," Vaiko said.



The controversy erupted after Palaniswami, referring to a viral audio clip, claimed that Stalin had kept his father, former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, under "house arrest" in his last days. EPS further said that if the AIADMK returns to power, the government would order a high-level state probe into the matter. To these allegations, Vaiko asserted that Stalin's devotion to his father was

exemplary. "M.K. Stalin has always protected his father, K. Karunanidhi, as the 'apple of his eye'. Palaniswami has served as Chief Minister and such remarks do not suit his stature. He should avoid using such words," the MDMK General Secretary added. On Tuesday, the MDMK General Secretary held a rally in the Kovilpatti Assembly constituency for the Secular Progressive Alliance, where he expressed confidence in a clean sweep for the DMK-led bloc in the upcoming elections. "I am working for all the candidates of our secular progressive alliance headed by DMK. Our alliance will sweep the polls and form the government again," he said.

TN polls: Vijay to campaign in Tirunelveli today amid strict police conditions



New Delhi, Apr 8: Actor-turned-politician Vijay will campaign in Tirunelveli on Wednesday, addressing a major public meeting at KTC Nagar as part of his outreach for the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. The rally, organised in support of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) candidates contesting in Tirunelveli and Tenkasi districts, has received police clearance with conditions, primarily focusing on crowd control and security arrangements at KTC Nagar. Party coordinator

Sengottaiyan said all guidelines would be strictly followed, even as he questioned the imposition of stringent norms exclusively on the TVK-related events. Following the public meeting, Vijay is scheduled to embark on a roadshow covering Thalayuthu, Thachanallur, Washermanpet, Samadhanapuram and the court complex area before returning to KTC Nagar. The party is also awaiting permissions to extend its campaign to Pudukkottai,

Tenkasi, Mayiladuthurai and Ranipet districts, where applications have already been submitted online. The campaign push comes against the backdrop of a series of nomination-related developments involving Vijay and his party candidates across the state. Vijay, who is contesting from both Perambur in Chennai and Tiruchy East, had his nomination accepted without issue in Tiruchy East. However, in Perambur, his papers briefly faced scrutiny after PMK candidate Thilagabama objected, alleging non-payment of property tax on assets in his name. The Returning Officer temporarily withheld acceptance, leading to tense scenes, before clearing the nomination after explanations were submitted by TVK representatives.

Uttarakhand seeks extra LPG supply from Centre ahead of Char Dham Yatra

New Delhi, Apr 8:

Fearing a shortage of LPG during the upcoming Char Dham Yatra beginning April 19, the Uttarakhand government on Tuesday asked the Centre to provide an additional supply of nearly 50,000 commercial cooking gas cylinders to the state to meet exigencies. The government has sought around five percent additional commercial LPG supply between June and September of the pilgrimage season. State Chief Secretary Anand Bardhan said the state government has written to the Centre requesting that the existing 100 percent quota be maintained, along with an additional five percent supply of commercial LPG cylinders, amid concerns of a possible LPG crisis over the ongoing West Asia con-



flict. Bardhan said the request was made keeping in view that Uttarakhand's economy is primarily driven by the Char Dham Yatra and tourism. "Demand for commercial LPG rises significantly due to the heavy influx of pilgrims and tourists from April to November. It intensifies further during the monsoon months between June and September due to the high risk of natural disasters. LPG serves as a critical fuel for relief and rescue operations during this period," he said. "In view of the emerging challenges, the state government has written to the

Centre requesting adequate stock of LPG cylinders in the state, especially commercial cylinders," he added. He further stated that the letter seeks the maintenance of 100 percent allocation of commercial LPG for Uttarakhand from April to November, along with an additional five percent

special stock for disaster relief operations. The state requires nearly 9,67,949 commercial LPG cylinders during the yatra period and an additional 48,397 cylinders for disaster contingencies. Bardhan also said that an enforcement drive has been underway since March 9, 2026, to ensure transparency, prevent hoarding, and maintain a smooth LPG supply across the state. The Chief Secretary has directed all district magistrates to keep constant vigil on cooking gas supplies in their respective areas and to intensify enforcement to prevent black marketing and artificial shortages created by unscrupulous elements or hoarders. He also asked district administrations to curb tendencies such as panic buying and hoarding of LPG cylinders.

India rations industrial LPG, prioritises pharma and food processing sectors as Middle East tensions rise

New Delhi, Apr 8: The Centre on Wednesday rolled out a revised system for distributing LPG to industries, seeking to cushion critical sectors from any disruption linked to the ongoing tensions in the Middle East. The move comes as concerns grow over global energy supplies. The government has picked sectors like pharmaceuticals, food processing, and agriculture as the ones that simply cannot afford a disruption, and is making sure they get fuel first. The oil ministry said the revised policy will cover a wide range of industries, from pharma and food to polymers, packaging, paints, steel, ceramics, glass and aerosols. These are the sectors that keep factories running and everyday supplies moving, so keeping them going is a priority.



Under the new system, companies will be eligible to receive up to 70 per cent of their LPG usage recorded before March 2026. At the same time, the total supply for the entire sector has been restricted to 0.2 thousand metric tonnes per day.

Priority has been clearly defined. Units that do not have the option of switching to natural gas will be served first, ensuring that production in such facilities continues without interruption. Push for PNG adoption, states get incentive-linked

allocation this, industries have been directed to register with oil marketing companies and seek piped natural gas connections through city gas distributors. However, this condition will not apply to units where LPG is integral to the manufacturing process and cannot be replaced. The Centre has also distributed 70 per cent of packaged non-domestic LPG among states. A further 10 per cent allocation will be linked to reforms, particularly steps taken by states to promote PNG usage. States have been asked to circulate the Natural Gas and Petroleum Products Distribution Order 2026 across departments, make use of reform-linked allocations, and fast-track policies related to compressed biogas. Separately, the ministry flagged a surge in demand for smaller LPG cylinders. Since March 23, nearly 7.8 lakh 5-kg cylinders have been sold nationwide. On one day earlier this week, sales crossed 1.06 lakh units, higher than the February daily average of around 77,000.

Thar.e: Mahindra to launch India's most favoured, feared Thar in electric avatar

New Delhi, Apr 8: India's most feared and favoured sports utility vehicle (SUV) Mahindra's Thar is about to debut in its electric avatar soon. The all-electric iteration of the popular off-roader—christened as Thar.e—is a significant cornerstone of Mahindra's BEV push, blending ZEV tech with "go anywhere" off-roading capabilities. According to several reports, the vehicle is expected to be launched in August 2026, with a price tag of between 20 and 25 lakh. The design is expected to be revolutionary, though not as quirky as the rest of Mahindra's e-vehicle lineup, such as XEV and BE series. The design will be quite a futuristic and boxy one, with an electric dual motor all-wheel drive set up to give it true-blue off-road capabilities. Thar.e would have the usual high ground clearance and will be built



on the dedicated INGLLO-PI platform. INGLLO-PI is a dedicated e-vehicle skateboard platform and is, as such, "born electric". For taking Thar.e's off-road capabilities to another level, this platform is made of high-strength Boron steel and gives the vehicle way more ruggedness compared to the present generation Thar. The new platform also imparts the Thar.e will better approach and departure angles. Reports suggest that the bonnet of the vehicle will be perceptibly smaller to

improve road visibility, and the interior will be redesigned entirely to sport a bigger infotainment cluster and a large touchscreen. The headlights, reports suggest, would be prominently square. The battery pack, though not announced hitherto, would range between 60kWh and 80kWh for a decent range. Though the ICE version of the Thar sports three doors, Thar.e is expected to have five doors for improved practicality that the Roxx version carries in the ICE iteration of Thar.

Oil crashes, Nikkei jumps 5%: How US-Iran ceasefire flipped global markets

New Delhi, Apr 8: Asian markets opened sharply higher on Wednesday after news of a two-week ceasefire between the United States and Iran eased fears of a wider conflict. Oil prices dropped steeply, while investors moved towards safer assets like gold. The development comes as both sides agreed to pause military action and allow limited navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, a key global oil route. The move has calmed energy markets and lifted investor sentiment across Asia. Japan's Nikkei 225 led the gains, rising 5.28 per cent to 2,822.44 points. South Korea's KOSPI climbed 5.61 per cent, adding 308.11 points. India's GIFT NIFTY also surged more than 3 per cent to touch 23,841.00. Other regional markets followed the trend. Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 3.04 per cent or 763.47 points, while Taiwan's Weighted Index advanced 3.72 per cent, up by 1,234.69 points. Oil falls sharply as Hormuz route reopens. Energy markets reacted strongly to the easing of tensions. Brent crude fell 13.04 per cent to USD



95.02 per barrel at 7:24 am IST. US crude declined 13.76 per cent to USD 97.41. At the same time, gold prices rose by 100.45 points or 2.13 per cent, reflecting continued demand for safe-haven assets. The breakthrough followed Iran's acceptance of a peace proposal put forward by US President Donald Trump. The agreement includes a temporary halt in military operations and a two-week window for safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi confirmed the decision in a post on X, outlining the country's position. "On behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I express gratitude and appreciation.

Three decades in Kolkata: Cognizant celebrates employees, innovation, and social impact

New Delhi, Apr 8: The company opened its second facility in India in Kolkata in 1996 starting from 2,000-square-foot rental office. Over last three decades, the company has grown significantly, now occupying 1.23 million square feet across three facilities in the city. The Kolkata operations employ nearly 18,000 associates. The company says this anniversary is both a celebration of past achievements and a step toward the future. Cognizant remains focused on nurturing talent, fostering innovation, contributing to Kolkata's technology ecosystem while continuing to invest in its people and the local community. Cognizant's commitment to social responsibility in Kolkata has been driven through Cognizant Foundation India. Over the years, it has implemented high-impact programs across range of areas.



They include neurological and neonatal care, thalassemia treatments, prevention of avoidable blindness. It also supports early intervention and rehabilitation for children with special needs, pro-

motes STEAM education for visually impaired children and develops sustainable livelihood and skill development programs for women and persons with disabilities. The company is bringing its associates

together through celebrations that include engaging activities emphasizing its people-first culture. A central part of the anniversary is the launch of an AI Tech Zone. This initiative is designed to develop platforms and engineering capabilities that help scale agentic AI across businesses. Global Recognition and Broader Presence in India Cognizant employs global workforce of 351,600 with more than 70% of its associates based in India.

Beyond Kolkata, the company has operational centers in cities like Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Coimbatore, Delhi/NCR, GIFT City, Hyderabad, Indore, Kochi, Mangaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Visakhapatnam. The company's workplace culture has earned it the 'Great Place To Work' certification in 31 countries, including India. That recognises its efforts to

Repo rate steady at 5.25%; RBI flags Hormuz disruptions, energy risks

New Delhi, Apr 8: The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday kept its key lending rate unchanged, with Governor Sanjay Malhotra saying the central bank was balancing steady domestic growth against rising global risks. The decision comes as India's economy continues to show strong momentum, even as concerns grow over higher energy prices and supply disruptions linked to tensions around the Strait of Hormuz. Announcing the outcome of the April 6-7 Monetary Policy Committee meeting, with brief deliberations continuing on Wednesday morning, Malhotra said the panel voted unanimously to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent. "The Monetary Policy Committee met on 6th, 7th and briefly today in the morning to deliberate and decide on the policy repo rate. After a detailed assessment of the evolving macroeconomic and financial develop-

opments and the outlook, the MPC voted unanimously to keep the policy repo rate unchanged under the liquidity facility at 5.25%," he said. He added that the standing deposit facility rate remains at 5 per cent, while the marginal standing facility rate and the bank rate continue at 5.5 per cent. The MPC has also retained its neutral policy stance.

Strong growth, but global shocks remain a concern

The RBI governor said India's real GDP growth for the previous year is estimated at 7.6 per cent, reflecting strong underlying momentum in economic activity driven by consumption and investment.

"The real GDP growth for last year is estimated at 7.6%. This reflects the underlying strong momentum in economic activity supported by robust consumption and investment amidst supportive policy measures, ongoing structural reforms and favourable financial conditions," Malhotra said.



At the same time, he cautioned that global headwinds could weigh on growth in the months ahead.

"Elevated energy and other commodity prices as also shocks to the availability of inputs due to disruptions in

the Strait of Hormuz, are likely to impact growth this year," he said. Malhotra noted that the government has taken steps to ensure the availability of key inputs across sectors to limit the impact of such disruptions.

He also pointed to continued support from the services sector, the impact of GST rationalisation carried out last year, and strong balance sheets of financial institutions and corporates as factors that should help sustain economic activity.

Trade deficit widens as imports surge, exports stay weak said India's merchandise exports saw a slight contraction of 0.2 per cent in the first two months of the year compared to the same period last year, mainly due to weakness in key global markets.

In contrast, imports rose sharply by over 22 per cent, largely driven by higher gold purchases, leading to a widening trade deficit.

He added that strong services exports and steady inward remittances are expected to keep the current account deficit within manageable levels for the previous year. However, global uncertainty and elevated energy prices could put pressure on the

external balance in the current year. Shipping disruptions, global demand may hit exports

RBI governor warned that disruptions to major shipping routes, along with higher freight and insurance costs, could weigh on merchandise exports going forward.

"Merchandise exports could be adversely impacted by disruptions to key shipping routes, the concomitant rise in freight and insurance costs and lower global demand on account of the conflict," he said.

At the same time, he noted that recently signed trade agreements with major partners could support exports and investment flows, while services exports are expected to remain resilient.

Taking these factors into account, the RBI has projected real GDP growth at 6.9 per cent for the current year, with quarterly estimates of 6.8 per cent in Q1, 6.7 per cent in Q2, 7 per cent in Q3 and 7.2 per cent in Q4.

Aviation stocks fly high: IndiGo ends over 8 per cent higher, SpiceJet hits upper circuit limit

New Delhi, Apr 8: Aviation stocks ended sharply higher on Wednesday following a steep decline in crude oil prices after the US and Iran announced a two-week ceasefire. Easing of geopolitical stress led to a sharp fall in Brent crude oil prices, which tumbled 14.12 per cent to USD 93.95 per barrel. InterGlobe Aviation, the parent firm of IndiGo, jumped 8.16 per cent to settle at Rs 4,616.60 on the BSE. During the day, it zoomed 10.98 per cent to Rs 4,737.40. The stock of SpiceJet climbed 5 per cent to reach its upper circuit limit of Rs 11.14. Stock markets also witnessed a sharp rally following the ceasefire announcement. Rallying for the fifth day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 2,946.32 points, or 3.95 per cent, to settle at 77,562.90. The 50-share NSE Nifty soared 873.70 points, or 3.78 per cent, to end at 23,997.35.



"The rally was primarily driven by a sharp improvement in global sentiment following the announcement of a temporary ceasefire between the US and Iran, which led to a significant cooling in crude oil prices and eased concerns around inflation and global growth," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Iran ceasefire sparks market rally: Sensex, Nifty surge over 3%

New Delhi, Apr 8: Indian equities opened sharply higher on Wednesday, tracking a sudden improvement in global mood after a two-week ceasefire between the United States and Iran eased fears of a wider conflict. The relief rally came after days of tension in the Middle East had rattled investors and pushed crude oil prices higher. With the announcement of a temporary ceasefire and signals around reopening the Strait of Hormuz, risk appetite returned across global markets. The BSE Sensex surged nearly 2,700 points in early



trade, while the NSE Nifty climbed over 800 points, both gaining more than 3 per cent. Buying was visible across sectors, with auto, banking, IT, metals and real estate stocks leading the rebound.

Broad-based buying lifts all sectors The rally was not limited to a few pockets. Real estate, auto, banking and pharma stocks rose as much as 5-6 per cent. Midcap and smallcap stocks outper-

formed, while largecaps also traded firmly higher. Market nerves clearly eased, with the India VIX sliding nearly 19 per cent, a sign that fear has taken a back seat for now.

On the stock front, InterGlobe Aviation saw a sharp jump of about 9 per cent, while Larsen & Toubro also moved up strongly, gaining over 7 per cent in early trade. Stocks such as Shriram Finance, Adani Ports and Adani Enterprises saw gains of 5-6 per cent. Financial majors Bajaj Finance and Bajaj Finserv, along with Asian Paints and UltraTech Cement, also moved higher.

Oil crash, global cues also had momentum

A major trigger for the rally was the sharp fall in crude oil prices. Brent crude slipped to the mid-90 range after recently crossing \$115, while US crude also declined steeply. Lower oil prices tend to support India's macro outlook by easing inflation and reducing import pressure. According to Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, the easing of geopolitical tensions has played a key role in lifting sentiment. "Indian equity markets are poised to open higher, supported by an improvement in global .

Dr. Jitendra Singh chairs DISHA meeting; reviews development projects, pushes for timely execution

DODA, APRIL 08: The District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) meeting of District Kishtwar was held today under the chairmanship of Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry for Science & Technology and Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office.

The meeting involved a comprehensive review of all the ongoing projects and public welfare measures being implemented in the district. The Union MoS emphasized improved inter-departmental coordination, strict monitoring and timely execution to ensure effective grassroots delivery. He had a detailed discussion on various vital issues including develop-



ment of airstrip facilities to boost regional connectivity and tourism and road works. He directed the officials to ensure adherence to quality parameters and project completion timelines under schemes like PMGSY. He also reviewed construction of cremation sheds, rehabilitation of Kandani inhabitants affected by power projects and promotion of local produce such

as kala zeera and saffron through better market linkages and branding. Dr. Jitendra Singh stressed the youth engagement through Sansad Khetl initiatives so that their energy is channelized in a right direction. He directed the Power Development Department to ensure transparent and consumer-friendly smart metering. He further called for wider awareness of

government schemes and prompt grievance redress to achieve inclusive development. The meeting was attended by Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) Sajad Ahmed Kitchloo, MLA Kishtwar Shagun Parihar, nominated members of the DISHA Committee besides other district officers, who deliberated on key points related to previous Action Taken Reports (ATRs) and

other developmental issues.

Dr. Jitendra Singh issued prompt directions to the senior district officers and officials from concerned departments to ensure timely resolution of all matters raised during the meeting. Earlier, Deputy Commissioner, Kishtwar, Pankaj Kumar Sharma, presented a detailed overview of the district's developmental profile and social sector priorities. He highlighted the progress under various centrally sponsored and UT schemes, the status of key ongoing projects and sector-wise performance across health, education, rural development, agriculture and social welfare besides elaborating the actionable strategies to strengthen the service delivery and public outreach.

J&K first to secure MeitY nod for establishing Centre of Excellence in AI

JAMMU, APRIL 08: In a significant stride towards strengthening the digital and innovation ecosystem of the Union Territory, Jammu & Kashmir has secured formal approval from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) for the establishment of a state-of-the-art Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Artificial Intelligence (AI) at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Jammu.

Termining the development as a landmark achievement, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo stated that with the visionary support of MeitY, Jammu & Kashmir is poised to emerge as a vibrant hub for artificial intelligence and advanced technologies, positioning the UT at the forefront of India's digital transformation. The establishment of IIT parks at Srinagar and Jammu too in pipeline. He maintained that the establishment of the CoE will open new avenues for the youth of the region by equipping them with cutting-edge skills in AI and allied domains so as to have local manpower available for the proposed IT parks for which land and other logistics are being worked out by the Department. He further observed that these initiatives will significantly enhance employability prospects and foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among the young population.

Highlighting the strategic importance of the initiative, the Chief Secretary observed that the CoE is expected to catalyse the development of a robust

research and innovation ecosystem. He envisaged that meaningful collaborations with premier national and international institutions, startups, and industry leaders, will further strengthen J&K's position in the technology landscape. He further emphasized that the CoE together with these IT Parks will act as a catalyst for attracting investments in the technology sector, encouraging startups and leading industry players to establish a footprint in the Union Territory. This, he said, will contribute significantly to economic growth and large-scale job creation.

Reiterating the government's commitment to inclusive development, the Chief Secretary stated that the Centre will ensure that the benefits of advanced technologies like AI permeate even to the remotest areas of Jammu & Kashmir, thereby supporting equitable and sustainable development. Secretary, Information Technology, Dr Piyush Singla, described the initiative as a "game-changer" for the UT's innovation ecosystem. He remarked that the CoE will bridge the gap between academia and industry, empower youth with future-ready skills, and enable the transformation of citizen-centric services through the adoption of AI-driven solutions. It is pertinent to mention that the proposal from J&K was approved in the inaugural Project Approval Board (PAB) meeting under MeitY's pan-India initiative for setting up AI Centres of Excellence under the IndiaAI frame-

work. The swift approval reflects the UT administration's meticulous planning, strong institutional coordination, and high-quality proposal submission.

The Centre of Excellence will be established within a dedicated 10,000 sq. ft. built-up space at IIT Jammu, which will serve as the anchor institution and implementation agency for the project. With a total outlay of ₹20 Cr under a 90:10 funding pattern between MeitY, Government of India, and the UT Government, to be disbursed over a period of four years, the CoE will operate through a robust Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) framework under the oversight of the Information Technology Department.

The Centre will foster a collaborative ecosystem involving academia, government, industry, and corporate stakeholders, guided by MeitY's IndiaAI Division. This convergence of students, researchers, innovators, and industry leaders is expected to drive cutting-edge AI applications and solutions. The CoE is going to spearhead advanced research and development in key sectors such as governance, healthcare, agriculture, and disaster management, while also nurturing startups and enhancing skill development. Aligned with the broader objectives of the IndiaAI Mission, the initiative is set to play a pivotal role in accelerating technological growth and socio-economic development across Jammu & Kashmir.

Divisional Level Mega Awareness Programme inaugurated at Doda; Focus on Health, Education & Social Responsibility

DODA, APRIL 08: The Divisional Level Mega Awareness Programme organized by the Directorate of School Education Jammu was inaugurated today at Town Hall Doda. The inaugural day witnessed the commencement of technical sessions, marking the beginning of the three-day awareness initiative.

The main event was simultaneously held at the Convention Hall Jammu, where the programme was formally inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Omar Abdullah. The live telecast of the event was held at the venue, enabling students and participants to witness the proceedings virtually. The programme here was graced by MLA Doda West Shakti Raj Parihar, as the Chief Guest, while District Development Commissioner Krishan Lal attended as the Guest of Honour. Former DDC Chairman Dhianter Singh Kotwal and former Minister and Religious Leader Khalid Najib Suhrawardy were also present on the occasion. The event was anchored by Master Om Prakash



Bhagat. Among others present included Joint Director Education Mohammad Ashfaq, CPO Manesh Kumar Manhas, ACD Din Mohammad Alaqi, Chief Education Officer Bhusan Kumar Pathak, ASP Headquarters, Principal GDC, along with district officers, teaching staff and a large number of students. The event commenced with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by the Chief Guest. Students from Government Girls Higher Secondary School presented a soulful rendition of the National Anthem under the guidance of Master Om Prakash Bhagat, followed

by a welcome song that added vibrancy to the occasion. The participants took a solemn pledge to fight against drug abuse, reinforcing the commitment to build a drug-free society. In his inaugural address, the chief guest spoke extensively on the issue of drug abuse and congratulated the organizers for conducting such an important awareness programme. "Drug abuse is one of the biggest challenges faced by the country today and the goal of Nasha Mukh Bharat can only be achieved through collective efforts," the Chief Guest noted. He directed the police department to act strictly against drug peddlers and

urged people to come forward, irrespective of caste, creed or religion to eradicate the menace of drugs from society and the nation. He also appealed to the public to promote traffic awareness, cultivate civic sense and actively contribute towards environmental protection. He stressed that illegal activities must not be supported under any circumstances. Speaking on the occasion, the District Development Commissioner emphasized the importance of traffic discipline and urged students to follow rules responsibly. He stressed the need to prioritize mental well-being through practical like

yoga. He further called for concerted efforts towards environmental conservation, including plantation drives and prevention of deforestation.

He also highlighted the need for an addiction campaign in the district and informed that Panchayat-level committees have been constituted to combat drug abuse, urging community and religious leaders to actively participate in the campaign.

Former Minister Najib Suhrawardy also addressed the gathering, expressing concern over rising drug abuse and increasing digital distractions among youth. He encouraged students and parents to remain vigilant, promote value-based education and focus on holistic development rather than merely job-oriented goals. Earlier, the Chief Education Officer delivered the welcome address, highlighting that the three-day programme aims to raise awareness on key issues such as traffic safety, mental health, drug addiction, career counselling and environmental protection.

Ankit Love Nominates His Cousin Sunny Vibhor As MP for Ladakh

(LEH, INDIA - 9 April 2026) Ankit Love, No.1 hit MTV US music artist, ex-Mayor of London candidate, and chief patron of Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party (JKNPP) yesterday in a video address on Facebook and Instagram nominated his cousin Sunny Vibhor as member of parliament candidate for Ladakh on the National Panthers Party ticket in the upcoming Indian parliamentary elections in 2029. Ladakh is the world's largest parliamentary constituency at 174,852 square kilometres. It is larger than England & Wales combined.

Sunny Vibhor, a graduate of Bishop Cotton School Shimla and former General Electric American corporate worker, in July 2023 was elected as the Ladakh UT state president of National Panthers Party in an extraordinary Panthers Council meeting at Udhampur chaired by Harsh Dev Singh state president of Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party. Harsh Dev Singh received a total of 50,082 votes for the 2024 Jammu and Kashmir Assembly. The top 3 tally of all candidates for the assembly. He secured 32,379 votes for Chennani and 17,703 votes for Nagrota by-election governing Ladakh's National Panthers Party above the National



Conference for the first time in the Jammu district. The National Panthers Party second place finish in the recent 2025 Nagrota by-election is one of the largest swings in the history of Indian politics, and the party finished first second in every seat it contested in the Jammu division, solidifying its position as the only local voice of the people of Jammu. Previously, in 2002 National Panthers Party had formed the ruling coalition holding two cabinet ministries and won all seats in the Udhampur district, home of the most revered temple of Mantali where Shiva and Parvati were married. At the time under the leadership of Prof. Bhim Singh, Panthers party as part of the ruling coalition governed Ladakh as the assembly level. Ankit Love said his cousin

Sunny Vibhor will contest the elections with the vision to develop Ladakh as a year round tourist destination. In the picturesque cold deserts of Ladakh where temperatures can drop below -20 around Leh and even lower at -40 Celsius in the Dras region, Ankit Love had a dream to use the Las Vegas style resorts model where large resorts hotels host retail, and entertainment facilities. Love said Sunny Vibhor a music aficionado would bring the top music artists and DJs to perform at new world class entertainment facilities in Ladakh throughout the winter and all year round. Part of the plan would include an upgrade to the airport ensuring Ladakh would receive a major boost to its economy and GDP, and an inflow of multi billion dollars investment and foreign currency as never witnessed before. Love said that top new jobs

Sakeena Itoo interacts with visiting Parliamentary Standing Committee at Srinagar

Highlights Government's commitment to creating a robust academic ecosystem across J&K

SRINAGAR, JAMMU 08: Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo today interacted with the members of Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports (EWCY&S) who are on two day visit of Jammu and Kashmir. During the interaction, the Minister presented a comprehensive overview of the initiatives undertaken by the Government to enhance the quality, accessibility and inclusivity of education sector across Jammu and Kashmir. She emphasized that the Government is focused on creating a robust academic ecosystem aligned with national educational priorities and global standards. Sakeena Itoo highlighted key reforms aimed at improving academic infrastructure, promoting research and innovation, strengthening faculty development programmes and expanding digital learning facilities in schools, colleges and universities. She



informed the Committee that sustained efforts are being made to modernize schools, college campuses, introduce industry-oriented courses and ensure skill-based education to improve employability among students. The Minister also underscored the importance of equitable access to education, stating that special attention is being given to students from remote and underserved areas through scholarship

schemes, upgraded facilities and enhanced connectivity initiatives. The Members of the Committee

appreciated the progress achieved in the higher education sector and held detailed deliberations on challenges, opportunities, and future strategies for academic growth. The discussion focused on improving research output, fostering innovation-driven learning, and strengthening institutional governance mechanisms. Sakeena Itoo reiterated that the Omar Abdullah led Government remains committed to nurturing academic excellence, encouraging innovation and creating a learner-centric environment that empowers youth and contributes to socio-economic development of Jammu and Kashmir.

05 MISSING PERSONS REUNITED WITH THEIR FAMILIES BY J&K POLICE KATHUA

KATHUA: 08 APR- J&K Police Kathua under the overall supervision of SSP Kathua Ms. Mohita Sharma IPS reunited five missing persons within the jurisdictional areas of PS Basohli, Bani, Billawar, Kathua & Lakhnapur. In the first instance, On dated 04/04/2026 one applicant namely Ashraf Hussain S/o Mohd Yousaf R/o Jated Tehsil Basohli District Kathua and lodged a written complaint regarding missing of his wife namely Razia Begum

W/o Ashraf Hussain. On receiving complaint a missing report was entered at this PS Basohli vide DD No.07 dated 04/04/2024. Acting swiftly police team led by SHO PS Basohli Insp. Rajeshwar Singh under the guidance of SDPO Basohli Sh. Om Parkash searched various places and with the help of technical assistance along with timely human intervention recovered said missing lady. While in the second instance, one more missing report was reg-

istered at PS Bani vide DDR No.12 dated 26/12/2025 regarding missing person namely Sanjeet Kumar S/o Bhagat Ram R/o Fatehpur Tehsil Bani District Kathua. Acting on the report, Police team led by SHO PS Bani Insp. Pawan Singh under the guidance of DySP Ops. Bani initiated efforts to trace the missing person and traced out said person. While in the third instance, On 19-03-2026 one Person namely Romesh Singh S/o Balia R/O

Banjat Bhatwal Tehsil Lohai Malhar District Kathua came at this PS Billawar and lodged a written complaint regarding missing of his wife namely Vimala Devi W/o Romesh Singh R/o Banjal Bhatwal Tehsil Lohai Malhar Dist. Kathua Age- 48 years. On receiving a complaint a missing report was entered at this PS Billawar vide GD No.09 dated 19-03-2026 and a team of PS Billawar led by SHO Billawar Insp Zabeer Mushtaq.

CS sets the ball rolling for identification of AAY beneficiaries for 200 units free electricity

Also reviews power sector reforms and solar adoption

JAMMU, APRIL 08: The Government of Jammu & Kashmir has initiated the process for identification of eligible beneficiaries under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) category across all districts for providing 200 units of free electricity, in line with its commitment to extend targeted relief to economically weaker sections.

The progress of this initiative was reviewed in a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, focusing on accelerating reforms in the power sector with a balanced emphasis on social welfare, sustainability, and efficiency. The meeting also assessed the implementation of the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) and scaling up of rooftop solar adoption under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana.

The free electricity initiative is expected to benefit over 2.22 lakh AAY households across the districts of the UT, ensuring near-universal district coverage. The process of identification and extension of this benefit to the eligible population is going on in coordination with the respective district administrations with many of the



Targeted beneficiaries living in far off areas.

On this occasion, Additional Chief Secretary, Power Development Department, Ashwani Kumar, informed that extensive field verification and data validation exercises are underway in close coordination with district administrations to ensure that only genuine beneficiaries are covered.

He highlighted that efforts are being made to address challenges such as discrepancies between ration card and electricity consumer databases, cases of migration, locked or inaccessible households, and reluctance among certain beneficiaries.

Special emphasis is being placed on ensuring inclusion of households in remote and mountainous areas, where logistical constraints such as scattered habitations and extended power distribution net-

works pose significant challenges.

Alongside this welfare initiative, the Union Territory has registered significant progress under the rooftop solar programme. The PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana is facilitating adoption through consumer-friendly financing options, including access to bank loans at attractive interest rates.

Managing Director, Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited, Guralp Singh, informed that over 28,600 applications have been received in Jammu Division, with more than 11,000 installations completed, reflecting a progress of around 67 percent.

Similarly, Managing Director, Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited, Mehmood Ahmad Shah, stated that Kashmir Division has witnessed an overwhelming response,

with over 73,000 applications received, and more than 17,700 installations completed, with several districts surpassing their assigned targets.

It was further informed that the scheme is largely being implemented under the RESCO (Renewable Energy Service Company) model, wherein private developers undertake installation and maintenance without requiring upfront investment from consumers, thereby making solar energy accessible to a broader population.

The meeting also reviewed progress under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS), a flagship reform initiative aimed at strengthening the power distribution infrastructure. Key interventions under RDSS include smart metering, infrastructure augmentation, feeder segregation, and reduction

of Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses. It was informed that works amounting to ₹5.762 Cr are being executed across districts through Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs), including ₹1.053 Cr for smart metering and ₹4.709 Cr for loss reduction measures.

The meeting was apprised that over 7.10 lakh smart meters have been installed across Jammu and Kashmir, including nearly 3 lakh installations in the past six months alone. Significant improvements in operational efficiency were also reported, with the ACS-ARRK gap reduced to 0.3 by FY 2025-26, billing efficiency increased to 77 percent, collection efficiency to 94 percent, and AT&C losses brought down to 30 percent.

The Chief Secretary reiterated that the integrated approach combining direct financial relief through free electricity with long-term structural reforms such as solarisation and RDSS-backed infrastructure upgrades is expected to substantially improve power reliability, reduce losses, and promote clean energy adoption across the Union Territory.

CM Omar chairs meeting on heritage promotion & cultural tourism strategy

Calls for adaptive reuse to strengthen heritage preservation and tourism



JAMMU, APRIL 08: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today chaired a meeting on Heritage Promotion and Cultural Tourism in Jammu & Kashmir to review measures for conservation and adaptive reuse of heritage assets aimed at boosting tourism in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Chief Minister stressed the need to strengthen institutional mechanisms and develop heritage-based tourism circuits to position J&K as a premier cultural tourism destination.

Advocating a holistic and forward-looking approach, the Chief Minister emphasized the need to blend conservation with commercialization and community engagement. He said that Jammu & Kashmir's vast heritage wealth must be leveraged as a dynamic engine for tourism and economic growth, while ensuring preservation of its cultural legacy.

The meeting also discussed in detail the proposed constitution of the J&K Heritage Conservation and Preservation Authority, with emphasis on strengthening its institutional capacity and ensuring effective implementation of conservation policies.

The meeting was attended by Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir

Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary Tourism and Public Works (R&B), Commissioner Secretary Information, Secretary Culture and other senior officials.

During the meeting, Secretary Culture delivered a detailed presentation highlighting the immense heritage potential of Jammu & Kashmir, encompassing both tangible and intangible assets such as monuments, forts, shrines and performing arts traditions. It was noted that despite this diversity, many heritage sites remain underutilized and are facing gradual deterioration due to limited technical expertise, fragmented institutional mechanisms and inadequate financial and policy support.

DC reviews implementation of Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan; Calls for intensifying awareness drive



REASI, APRIL 08: Deputy Commissioner Reasi Kumar Abhishek today chaired a meeting to review the implementation of the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan / JK Abhiyan in the district. The Deputy Commissioner conducted a comprehensive review of the ongoing three-month Nasha Mukht IEC Campaign being carried out across the district. Detailed discussions were held on the awareness activities, outreach pro-

grammes and community participation initiatives aimed at curbing substance abuse. Emphasizing the need for intensified efforts, the DC directed the concerned departments to strengthen awareness drives at the grassroots level, particularly targeting youth, educational institutions and vulnerable sections of society. He stressed the importance of coordinated action to ensure effective dissemination of anti-drug messages

through seminars, rallies, social media campaigns and other IEC initiatives. He also highlighted the role of IRP and GRP deployed at the Railway Station Katra, initiatives under Mission YUVA and called for active involvement of schools, colleges and civil society organizations to make the campaign more impactful and result-oriented.

The Deputy Commissioner also directed all Sub-Divisional Magistrates to conduct similar awareness programmes at the sub-division level to ensure wider outreach and deeper impact of the campaign across the district. He instructed officers to regularly monitor the progress of activities and submit timely reports to ensure accountability and achievement of desired outcomes.

Kathua admin hosts live telecast of CM's inaugural address for 3-day awareness programme

DC Rajesh Sharma urges students to develop positivity in behaviour

KATHUA, APRIL 08: District Administration Kathua today hosted the live telecast of the inaugural ceremony of the Three-Day youth Awareness Programme, an initiative of the School Education Department, formally inaugurated by Chief Minister J&K Omar Abdullah from Convention Centre Jammu. The live broadcast was arranged here in the Auditorium Hall of Government Degree College (GDC) Women. The Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma presided over the session. The event was coordinated under the supervision of Chief Education Officer Kewal Krishan. The schools from across the district participated in the inaugural day event. The three-day awareness programme focuses on key themes including mental health, drug de-addiction, career counselling, traffic awareness and environmental protection. On Day 1, the inaugural and technical sessions were held, during which students attended awareness work-



shops and expert lectures delivered by resource persons on the identified themes. The participants also listened to the address of the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Education Minister Sakeena too during the live telecast. Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted that all five themes-mental health, drug de-addiction, career counselling, traffic awareness and environmen-

tal protection-are crucial in shaping the lives of young students. He emphasized that children at the school-going age are best placed to understand and imbibe the difference between right and wrong, thereby evolving into responsible citizens. He called upon students to actively avail this opportunity for learning and adopt positive behavioural changes. Stressing collective responsibility, he urged

students and all stakeholders to unite in the fight against the drug menace and contribute towards building a healthier, safer and more aware society.

During the three-day programme, a series of activities including lectures on career counselling, mental health and environmental protection are being conducted. On April 09, events such as debate and painting competitions based on the themes will be organized, while on April 10, awareness lectures and a rally will be held at Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Boys Kathua. Among others, Additional Deputy Commissioner Surinder Mohan Sharma, RTO Surinder Sharma, Divisional Forest Officer, Principal GDC Women Kathua, Dr. Jaipal Singh, Principal GHSS Nagri, Mangal Singh, District Social Welfare Officer, District Information Officer, DEPO, officials of the School Education Department and a large number of students.

School Education Department kick-starts 3-Day District-Level Awareness Programme in Kishtwar

KISHTWAR, APRIL 08: The Department of School Education today kick-started a three-day District-Level Awareness Programme here in the district, focusing on road safety, social awareness, environmental protection, mental health, drug de-addiction and career guidance. The 03 Day Divisional Level Awareness programme was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, Omar Abdullah at Jammu. The district-level programme was held here at the



Government Degree College (GDC). Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Sharma attended the event as the Chief Guest. The DC was warmly received by the CEO Sanjay Dogra and other officers and staff of the School Education Department. The DC kick-started the programme with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp along with other dignitaries. He also interacted virtually with the Minister for School Education, Higher Education, Health & Medical Education and Social Welfare Department.

Rana inaugurates free medical camp for specialized healthcare at Mendhar

MENDHAR, APRIL 08: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today inaugurated a two day free medical camp at Dak Bungalow Mendhar. The camp has been organised by the Kathryn Kelley Memorial Charitable Society in collaboration with the Al-Faizan Charitable Trust.



Addressing the gathering, the Minister commended the organisers for their efforts in delivering spe-

cialised healthcare services directly to the residents of border and remote areas. He highlighted that such initiatives are crucial in strengthening the preventive and primary healthcare systems, particularly in areas where access to medical facilities remains limited. The camp witnessed significant participation, with a large number of residents from Mendhar and surrounding areas evincing keen interest in availing the medical services being offered in the camp. The medical camp provided comprehensive care under a single roof with consultations across multiple specialties and providing free medicines and basic diagnostic support to the patients.

Editor, Publisher, Printer & Owner: Rajni Sharma, Published at: Sec-2, Channi Himmat, Jammu

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All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent courts and forums in Jammu City