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DIPK-11540/25 Dated: 03-03-2026

Peace And Stability Shared Responsibility: LG

Orders Heightened Alert In J&K Amid Security Review



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday directed police and civil administration officials to remain on heightened alert and take all necessary measures to maintain peace and tranquillity across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Lieutenant Governor chaired a high-level meeting at the Police Control Room in Kashmir to review the

prevailing law and order situation in the Union Territory.

During the meeting, he instructed officers to ensure close monitoring of the ground situation and adopt proactive measures to prevent any disturbance to public order.

The Lieutenant Governor also appealed to citizens and community leaders to uphold harmony and contribute towards maintaining a calm and peaceful atmosphere. | [More on P10](#)

Northern Army Commander Reviews Situation

Northern Army Commander Lt Gen Pratik Sharma on Tuesday reviewed the evolving security situation in Kashmir. In a post on X, the Northern Command said Lt Gen Sharma engaged with Formation Commanders and representatives of sister agencies to deliberate on the prevailing security situation.

"Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, #ArmyCdrNC, chaired a meeting in #Srinagar to review the evolving security situation in Kashmir Valley. #NorthernCommand | [More on P10](#)

Which Law Gave US, Israel The Authority?: CM On Iran Strikes

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday strongly condemned the United States and Israel for carrying out strikes on Iran, questioning the legal authority behind such actions and warning against the dangerous spread of war.

He said no international law permits foreign military aggression, the assassination of a nation's



leader, or the killing of civilians.

"Using external force and displaying military

power to overthrow governments is not permitted under any international law. The brutal killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, along with members of his family, raises a serious question. Which law gave the United States or Israel the authority to do this?" Omar told reporters.

Referring to global precedents, he said if such actions were justified, then similar interventions elsewhere would also be deemed legitimate.

"If this is allowed, then what Russia did in Ukraine would also be justified. Tomorrow, if India were to enter a neighbouring country and intervene, would that also be justified?" he asked.

Omar said the nature of governance in any country must be decided by its own people. "Whether it is Iran, the United States or Israel, it is for their people to decide the system under which they want to live," he said. | [More on P10](#)

Educational Institutions In Kashmir Shut Till Mar 7

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Following the widespread protests across the Valley against the killing of Supreme leader of Iran Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the J&K government has decided to shut educational institutions till March-07 as a precautionary measure.

Education Minister Sakina Itoo said that in order to ensure the safety of the students, the government has decided to close all the educational institutions till Sunday.

"We have decided to keep schools, colleges and universities closed till March-07" Minister Itoo said.

The Minister also said that the government is monitoring the | [More on P10](#)

War Spreads Across Gulf, World Watches Nervously

AP/TANS

Dubai: Iran expanded its targets on Tuesday, striking the US Embassy in Saudi Arabia as Washington began to pull many staff out of the Middle East. The US and Israel battered Iran with airstrikes in what President Donald Trump suggested was just the start of a war that has severely disrupted the world's supply of oil and gas, international shipping, and air travel.

The conflict escalated further on its fourth day, with Israel sending new ground troops into Lebanon and



A mourner holds up a picture of one of the victims of the Israeli-American attack on a school in southern Iran

explosions ringing out in Iran's capital. Hundreds of people have been killed, the vast | [More on P10](#)

India Relocates Students From Tehran

India on Tuesday said its mission in Iran has relocated the majority of Indian students from Tehran amid the worsening security situation in the Iranian capital. The move comes as the conflict in West Asia intensified, with the United States and Israel launching fresh attacks on Iran, while | [More on P10](#)

Mobile Curbs In Kashmir Likely Till Wednesday

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Mobile data restrictions and suspension of select telecom services across the Kashmir Valley are likely to remain in force till Wednesday evening, officials said, adding that a review will be conducted tomorrow before a final decision is taken on relaxation or continuation.

The Jammu and Kashmir Home Department has confirmed the temporary suspension and curtailment of telecom services across the Valley.

Prepaid mobile data services have been restricted to 2G speed, capped at 128 kbps across 2G, 3G and 4G networks. Additionally, prepaid mobile services, including JK10 data, voice and | [More on P10](#)

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DIPK-NB-3481/25 Dated: 03-03-2026

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Safety Of 1 Cr Indians In Gulf Top Priority: Govt

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: As the conflict in West Asia intensified, India on Tuesday emphasised the interest of one crore Indian nationals in the region and voiced concern over possible disruptions in energy supplies because it could have serious consequences for the Indian economy.

New Delhi also strongly called for "dialogue and diplomacy" to ensure an early end to the conflict, while noting that India has critical stakes in the security and stability of the region as a proximate neighbour and the current developments "evoke great anxiety".

In its second statement | [More on P10](#)

Pahalgam Terror Attack NIA Court Seeks China's Help to Trace Device

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: A Special NIA Court in Jammu has issued a Letter Rogatory to the competent judicial authority in China, seeking assistance in tracing the supply chain and end-user details of a mobile device linked to last year's Pahalgam terror attack.

The order was passed by the Special Judge on an application filed by Deputy Inspector General of the

National Investigation Agency, Sandeep Choudhary, under Section 112 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita.

The case pertains to the April 22 attack in Pahalgam, south Kashmir, in which terrorists affiliated with the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba killed 25 tourists and a local guide.

During the investigation, the NIA seized several material objects and electronic devices | [More on P10](#)



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Your Age May Influence Antibody Production In Response To A Virus: Study

Press Trust Of India

Age could be a dominant factor in influencing antibody production in response to a virus -- for a given virus, certain antibodies increase with age while others decrease, depending on which part of the virus is targeted, researchers have found. The team, including researchers from Institut Pasteur at France's National Centre for Scientific Research, have shown that when attacked by the same virus, individuals can produce antibodies that target different parts of the virus. Biological sex and genetic factors of the host are also important factors which determine not only the quantity of antibodies produced but also the specific viral regions they target, the team found. The findings, published in the journal Nature Immunology, could have major implications for developing treatments better tailored to an individual's profile. The researchers analysed data from the Milieu Intérieur study, launched 15 years ago and aimed at dissecting the interplay between genetics and environment and its impact on the immune system. One thousand healthy individuals were enrolled whose socio-economic status, lifestyle, medical history, and biological markers were included in the study.

The authors "demonstrate that age, sex and continent of birth extensively affect not only the viruses but also the specific viral epitopes targeted by the antibody repertoire." An epitope is a region on an antigen or substance triggering an immune response where an antibody attaches itself.



"Furthermore, we identify strong associations between antibodies against 34 viruses and genetic variants at HLA, FUT2, IGH and IGK loci, some of which increase autoimmune disease risk," the authors said. "A major strength of this study is its exhaustive quantification of the antibody repertoire. We were able to characterize exactly which parts of viral proteins are targeted by antibodies in each individual," author Etienne Patin, research director in the human evolutionary genetics laboratory at the Institut Pasteur, said. The researchers found that more than half of the anti-

body repertoire produced as part of an immune response varied depending on age. For influenza H1N1 and H3N2, antibodies in young adults were found to mainly target a part of the viral surface protein known as hemagglutinin, which evolves rapidly, whereas antibod-

ies among older individuals tended to target a more stable region of the same protein known as the stalk domain, the team said. Further, women were found to produce more antibodies against hemagglutinin while antibodies among men tended to target other viral proteins, despite comparable vaccination rates between the two sexes, the study found. Host genetic factors further shape antiviral immunity. "We identified mutations in genomic regions known to encode the immunoglobulin repertoire. These variants determine which genes are used to produce antibodies," Patin said.

Office of the Executive Engineer (Mechanical), PW(R&B), Central Kashmir

Engineering Complex (PMGSY Building), Rajbagh Srinagar Kashmir-190008

DATE EXTENSION - 01

Subject:- Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of HVAC System at New High Court Rakh-i-Gund Aksha Bemina

Reference:- 1. eNIT No:- R&B/MDCK/NIT/26 of 2025-26. Dated:- 28.01.2026

Due to poor response, the last date of Bid Submission will be 12-03-2026 (16:00 hrs) & opening of technical bid will be 13-03-2026 (at 15:00 hrs.)

Rest, all other terms and conditions of the said e-NIT (with annexures & corrigenda) shall remain same.

DIPK-11481/25

Dated:- 03.03.2026

Sd/-
 Executive Engineer
 PW(R&B) Mechanical Division
 Central Kashmir

GOVERNMENT OF (U.T) JAMMU & KASHMIR Office Of The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt. Ground Water Division Srinagar

E-mail:- suresh05.gupta@jk.gov.in

Tel./FaxNo:-0194-2411285

Re-Tender Corrigendum 1st

Subject: 1. Repair of machine drilled hand pumps Bore Wells at various location of Halqa Hudpora. (08 No. sites as per Annexure in eNIT No) (S.No.4)

- Reference: 1. This office Extension Notice 3rd issued vide endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/25-26/Camp/18978-95, dated: 18-02-2026. Bearing Tender ID No. 2026_PHE_301079_4.
2. This office e-NIT No. 74/JS-PHE/GWDS/Mech. of 2025-26, issued vide endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/25-26/Camp/17904-921, dated: 21-01-2026.

Due to "NO Response" for the above mentioned works advertised vide e-NIT No. and Tender ID No's under reference. Which was scheduled to be downloaded till 26-02-2026 Up-to 01:00 PM are rescheduled as per the details given below:-

S.No.	Item	Fresh Date
1.	Start date & Time of submission of bids	28-02-2026 Up-to 04:00 PM
2.	Last date & Time of submission of bids	09-03-2026 Up-to 11.00 AM
3.	Date & Time of opening of tenders	10-03-2026 Up-to 10.00 AM

NOTE: All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the aforesaid e-NIT issued vide above referred endst: nos.

No:- JS-PHE/GWDS/25-26/Camp./19617-34
 Dated: 28-02-2026

DIPK-11539/25
 dated: 03-03-2026

Sd/-
 Executive Engineer
 Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt.
 Ground Water Division Srinagar.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir (UT) Directorate of Urban Local Bodies Kashmir (Srinagar) OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE BIJBEHARA. New office complex near Town Hall Bijbehara

Phone: 01932463519

Twitter: MCBijbehara

Email: executiveofficermcb@gmail.com.

Ban on Single Use Plastic & Thin Plastic Carry Bags

PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2022 (as amended), Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 and advisories issued under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban, the Municipal Committee Bijbehara hereby notifies that the use, sale, storage, manufacture, transport and distribution of Single Use Plastic (SUP), Styrofoam, thermocol and non-biodegradable plastic carry bags below prescribed thickness is strictly prohibited within municipal limits.

Enforcement shall be undertaken through inspections and challan mechanism. Violators shall be penalized as per notified rates.

ULB-wise Penalty Structure (to be filled by ULB)

Violation	Fine (₹)	Remarks
Plastic carry bags <120 microns	200-500	Per kg / per instance
Plastic carry bags <75 microns	200-500	Per kg / per instance
Single Use Plastic items	500-2000	per instance

No:MC/Bij/SBM/2026/556-59

Sd/=-

Date:- 28/02/2026

Executive Officer
 Municipal Committee
 Bijbehara

Government of Jammu & Kashmir (UT)
 Directorate of Urban Local Bodies Kashmir (Srinagar)
 OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE BIJBEHARA.
 New office complex near Town Hall Bijbehara

Phone: 01932463519

MCBijbehara

Email: executiveofficermcb@gmail.com.

User Charges for Solid Waste Management Services

PUBLIC NOTICE

As per Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 & 2024 and SBM-U guidelines, the Municipal Committee Bijbehara hereby notifies **User Charges for door-to-door collection, transportation of municipal solid waste.**

ULB-wise User Charges (Monthly)

Category	User Charge (₹)
Residential Households	50/-
Commercial Establishments	100/-
Institutional Establishments	300/-

Non-payment of user charges shall attract penal action as per notified.

No:MC/Bij/SBM/2026/561-64

Sd/=-

Date: - 28.02.2026

Executive Officer
 Municipal Committee
 Bijbehara

Government of Jammu & Kashmir (UT)
 Directorate of Urban Local Bodies Kashmir (Srinagar)
 OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE BIJBEHARA.
 New office complex near Town Hall Bijbehara

Phone: 01932463519

MCBijbehara

Email: executiveofficermcb@gmail.com.

Sanitation Service Tariff & Penalties

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Municipal Committee Bijbehara hereby notifies sanitation service tariffs and penalties for non-compliance with Solid Waste Management Rules 2016 & 2024.

Sanitation Tariff

Category	Tariff (₹) Per Month
Residential	50/-
Commercial	100/-
Institutional	300/-

Penalties

Nature of Violation	Penalty (₹)
Non-segregation of waste at source	500/-
Littering / open dumping	1000/-
Repeated non-compliance	2000/-

No:MC/Bij/SBM/26/565-67

Sd/=-

Date:- 28.02.2026

Executive Officer
 Municipal Committee
 Bijbehara

Government of Jammu & Kashmir (UT)
 Directorate of Urban Local Bodies Kashmir (Srinagar)
 OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE BIJBEHARA.
 New office complex near Town Hall Bijbehara

Phone: 01932463519

MCBijbehara

Email: executiveofficermcb@gmail.com.

Safai Mitra Safety & Fecal Sludge Management

PUBLIC NOTICE

In compliance with national advisories under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban:

- Manual hazardous sewer/septic tank entry without safety gear is strictly prohibited.
- Dumping of untreated fecal sludge in drains or open areas is a punishable offence.
- Citizens may report violations on Helpline 14420.

Desludging Charges & Penalties

Particular	Amount (₹)
Within Town	3000/-
Outside Town within range of 05	4000/-
Outside Town within range of 10	5000/-
Outside Town within range of 15	6000/-
Outside Town within range of 20	7000/-
Penalty for illegal dumping	5000/-

No:MC/Bij/SBM/26/571-73

Sd/=-

Date:- 28.02.2026

Executive Officer
 Municipal Committee
 Bijbehara

Government of Jammu & Kashmir (UT)
 Directorate of Urban Local Bodies Kashmir (Srinagar)
 OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE BIJBEHARA.
 New office complex near Town Hall Bijbehara

Phone: 01932463519

MCBijbehara

Email: executiveofficermcb@gmail.com.

Bulk Waste Generators - On-site Processing

PUBLIC NOTICE

All Bulk Waste Generators including hotels, institutions, apartments and commercial establishments are directed to ensure **on-site processing of wet waste** as per SWM Rules, 2016 & 2024

Failure to comply shall attract penalties as notified by the ULB.

No:MC/Bij/SBM/26/568-70

Sd/=-

Date:-28.02.2026

Executive Officer
 Municipal Committee
 Bijbehara

DIPK-NB-3478/25
 dated: 03-03-2026

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The Jammu & Kashmir Board Of School Education

New Camus, Bemina, Srinagar

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have passed/appeared in SSE (Class 10th) under Roll No. 139053106 Session: 2024 Year: 2024 through The Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education. The error has been committed by the school against my name as SAQIB AHMAD instead of SAQIB AHMAD BABA. Now I have applied for correction in The Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education, New Campus, Bemina, Srinagar.



If any person has any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the Assistant Secretary, Certificates Kashmir Division within seven days from the date of publication of this notice, after the expiry of said period, no objection will be entertained.
 Name: Saqib Ahmad Baha
 Father's name: Showkat Ahmad Baha
 Mother's name: Mehmooda Bano
 Date of birth: 05-05-2007
 R/o Rangpora, Illahi bagh

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have changed my name from Tabish Bashir tantary to Tabish Bashir In future I will be known as Tabish Bashir. If anyone is having any objection, he/she may contact Passport Office, Srinagar within 7 days. After 7 days no objection will be accepted.

iko

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform that I, Arsalan Tasaduq S/O Tasaduq Hussain Dar R/O Khushipora HMT Srinagar have applied for enlistment as Class D civil Contractor. If any person has any objection in this regard, they may submit their objections (if any) in writing to the office of Chief Engineer, CID wing JKSPDC Bemina Kashmir or Secretary Technical PWD (R&B), Civil Secretariat Jammu within 7 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. No objection shall be entertained thereafter

ab

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Tajamul Mir S/o Mohd Subhan Mir, R/o Kati Bugh, Tehsil Kunzer, District Baramulla, Jammu & Kashmir (UT), do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as under:
 That I am a permanent resident of Jammu & Kashmir (UT), India.
 That my name is Tajamul Mir and I was born on 24-03-1990 at home.
 That my Date of Birth was wrongly entered in my Aadhaar Card due to inadvertent error.
 That my correct Date of Birth is 24-03-1990.
 That I require issuance/digitization/ updation of my Birth Certificate with QR Code in official records in my favour reflecting the correct Date of Birth.
 That the contents of this affidavit are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. In case any information is found incorrect, I shall be personally responsible for the same. This notice is issued for general information and record.
 Deponent
 Tajamul Mir
 R/o Kati Bugh, Tehsil Kunzer
 District Baramulla

fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed to the General public that i Khazir Mohd Dar S/O. Mohd Abdulah Dar R/O. Tulwari applying for the issuance of Date of Birth Certificate (DOB). My DOB is 20-04-1976. As per Medical Certificate and Chokidar record, if anybody having any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the (MCL) Exective Officer Municipal Committee Langate Distt Kupwara within a period of seven days from the publication of this notice. No objection will be entertained after expiry of stipulated period.
 Khazir Mohd Dar
 S/O:- Mohd Abdulah Dar
 R/O :- Tulwari . Tehsil . Langate Distt :Kupwara .

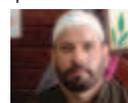
fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed to the General public that i Ab Gani Mir R/O:- Guloora applying for the issuance of Date of Birth Certificate (DOB). My DOB is 27 -06.1948 .As per Chokidar record . If anybody having any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the (BDO) Block Development Office Langate Distt Kupwara within a period of seven days from the publication of this notice. No objection will be entertained after expiry of stipulated period.
 Ab Gani Mir
 S/O. Gh Rasool Mir
 R/O : Guloora . Tehsil . Langate . Distt :Kupwara .

fko

اطلاع عام



مظہر جاوید احمد ڈار ولد محمد یوسف ڈار ساکن موضع شانو بزر ایچا اخبار ہر خاص و عام کو مطلع کرتا ہے کہ اس کے حق میں منگرا گریٹر نیچر نے اپیل عینکس ایگریکلچر اینڈ پیسٹیسائڈس بریری پورہ نام زیر تصدیق نمبر 4598 پیسٹیسائڈس اجراء کی تھی اسی لیسن پر اس کی بریری پورہ بندواڑہ میں اپنا کاروبار کرتا ہے۔ اس سال کوئی مجبوری کی وجہ سے اپنا پیسٹیسائڈس کاروبار بریری پورہ بندواڑہ سے لاکھنڈہ قاضی آباد منتقل کرنا پڑا ہے۔ اس بارے میں اگر کسی بھی شخص کو کوئی عذریا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنے عذر نامت (7) یوم کے اندر اندر چیف ایگریکلچر آفسر کیپوڑہ کے دفتر میں پیش کرے۔ یہ عذر نامت کے بعد کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

مشتہر:- جاوید احمد ڈار ولد:- محمد یوسف ڈار
 ساکن:- شانو:- تحصیل لنگیٹ - ضلع کیپوڑہ

Srinagar Police Registers FIR against Misinformation Network



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In a major crackdown on fake news, Srinagar Police has registered a case against a network of news channels, media outlets, and individuals for allegedly spreading misinformation to disrupt peace in the valley.

Officials said the accused were involved in systematically circulating fabricated and unverified content aimed at inciting unrest and creating social disharmony. Police described the propaganda as a "grave threat" to national integrity and public order.

According to officials, an FIR (No. 01/2026) has been lodged at the Cyber Police Station. "Several social media profiles have been identified and their handlers have been summoned to the Cy-

ber Cell for questioning," a police spokesperson told KNS. "The investigation is progressing, and strict legal action will follow against those found guilty."

The development comes amid concerns over coordinated misinformation campaigns targeting the region.

Issuing a stern warning, Srinagar Police urged citizens and media houses to verify facts from official sources before publishing any content that could disturb communal harmony. "Spreading fake news or inflammatory content will invite stringent legal consequences," the spokesperson added.

Authorities have reiterated their commitment to maintaining law and order, vowing zero tolerance for any attempts to destabilize peace in the region.

KU Suspends Classes, Defers Exams



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The University of Kashmir has announced the suspension of all teaching and academic activities across its campuses until March 7, 2026, officials confirmed on Tuesday.

According to an official communiqué issued by the Registrar, the directive applies to all campuses of the varsity and will remain in force up to and including March 7. Students have been asked to stay updated through the university's official communication channels

for any further instructions.

Authorities said that a decision regarding the reopening of classes will be taken after March 7, following a review of the prevailing situation.

Meanwhile, the university has also postponed all examinations scheduled for March 4, 2026. An official notification from the Office of the Controller of Examinations stated that all papers slated for Wednesday stand deferred. Fresh dates for the postponed examinations will be notified separately.



A LONE CYCLIST rides through Lal Chowk on Tuesday.

KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

Court Orders Fresh Probe In Nishat Youth's Mysterious Death

M Ahmad

SRINAGAR: A court here has ordered further investigation, to be conducted by an officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police, into the mysterious death of a 22-year-old youth from Nishat, observing serious deficiencies and material contradictions in the earlier probe by the men in uniform.

The court of Special Judge NDPS Cases Srinagar, Vinor Kumar, passed the orders on a protest petition filed by Nazir Ahmad Hafiz, the father of the deceased youth—Ruman Nazir.

The police had filed the FIR—15/2025 with police station Nishat Srinagar—based on directions by the Chief Judicial Magistrate on a complaint filed by Hafiz.

Subsequently, police filed a charge-sheet for the offences under Sections 8/21, 27 and 29 of the NDPS Act and Ruman and two other accused, attributing the cause of death to a drug overdose.

Unimpressed by the police probe, Hafiz through his counsel advocate Abrar Ahmad Bhat alleged that the investigation was incomplete, biased and mechanical, and had ignored crucial material suggesting foul play. He contended that on the body of the deceased was recovered on October 1, 2024, at the instance of the accused persons, three days after he went missing on September 28. The accused, he said, had

initially claimed they had dropped the deceased near Nishat to meet his girlfriend and had no knowledge of his whereabouts, but it was upon sustained question which led to the recovery of Ruman's body.

The counsel emphasized that the Investigating Officer has not investigated whether the alleged drug was administered voluntarily or forcibly, nor whether it was supplied or injected by the accused persons. The possibility of homicide under the garb of overdose has been completely ignored, he said. The Investigating Officer, he said, has heavily relied upon the Forensic Science Laboratory report to claim that heroin was detected from the viscera of the deceased, treating it as conclusive proof of death due to drug overdose. However, he said, the FSL report merely indicates the presence of the substance and is not conclusive proof that the death occurred solely due to overdose or that the drug was self-administered.

One of the significant lapses highlighted during the arguments was the failure of the Investigating Officer to record statements of key family members, including the deceased's mother and brother, under Section 180 of the BNSS. The complainant had alleged that on the day of his disappearance, the deceased made a WhatsApp call to his mother stating that the accused had taken his money near Gani Baker's shop in Nishat and that a

quarrel had ensued.

Another major gap identified was the alleged trip to Jammu for procurement of heroin. The charge sheet relied primarily on the statements of the accused that they travelled to Jammu, procured heroin from an unknown individual and later consumed it, leading to overdose.

After hearing prosecution and the counsel, the court observed that no independent corroboration such as toll records, CCTV footage, hotel records, fuel receipts or tower location data had been collected to verify the claim regarding procuring of heroin.

Holding that the deficiencies were not minor or technical but went to the root of the matter, the court allowed the protest petition and directed further investigation.

Subsequently, the court directed the Senior Superintendent of Police Srinagar to ensure that the further investigation was conducted by an officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police and completed within 60 days. The court also ordered submission of fortnightly progress reports detailing steps taken, evidence collected and witnesses examined.

A supplementary report or supplementary charge sheet is to be filed upon completion of further investigation. The matter has been listed after sixty days for consideration of the supplementary report and progress made.

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,2452222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BIJBERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

- Sgr-Jammu highway - (OPEN)
- Mughal Road - (OPEN)
- Srinagar- Leh- (OPEN)



PRAYERS

FAJR	5:34
ZUHR	12:43
ASR	4:47
Magrib	6:33
ISHA	7:50

From KO Archives

- 51 - Nero, later to become Roman Emperor, is given the title princeps iuventutis (head of the youth)
- 1152 - Frederick I Barbarossa elected Holy Roman Emperor
- 1215 - King John of England makes an oath to the Pope as a crusader to gain the support of Innocent III.
- 1790 - France is divided into 83 départements, which cut across the former provinces in an attempt to dislodge regional loyalties based on noble ownership of land.
- 1793 - French troops conquer Geertruidenberg, Netherlands
- 1804 - The Battle of Vinegar Hill, colony of New South Wales (Australia), when Irish convicts (some of whom had been involved in Ireland's Battle of Vinegar Hill in 1798) led the colony's only significant convict uprising.
- 1824 - The "National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck" founded in the United Kingdom, later to be renamed The Royal National Lifeboat Institution in 1858.
- 1841 - Longest US presidential inauguration speech (8,443 words), William Henry Harrison
- 1861 - Abraham Lincoln is inaugurated as the 16th US President
- 1865 - Abraham Lincoln inaugurated for his 2nd term as US president
- 1870 - On command of Louis Riel, Thomas Scott is executed by a firing squad. Riel rejects all appeals and requests to intervene in an attempt to demonstrate to the Canadian government that the Métis must be taken seriously

Quran Khawani, Marsiya Recitations Held in City

Syed Mohammad Burhan

SRINAGAR: Solemn gatherings were organised across Srinagar city as people recited marsiya and held Quran khawani to pay homage to Iran's late Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei, following his assassination in a reported United States-Israel military strike that has heightened tensions in West Asia.

Religious gatherings were held at various localities in Srinagar and other districts, where verses from the Holy Quran were recited and elegies were offered in remembrance of the departed leader. Clerics addressed the gatherings, urging restraint and peaceful observance while reflecting on Khamenei's political and religious legacy.

Authorities had earlier im-

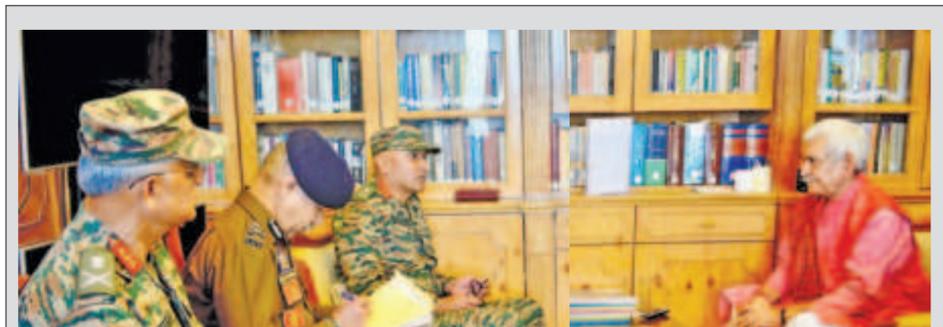


posed precautionary measures across the city, including the closure of schools and colleges, curbs at the district level and restrictions on internet speed. Officials

said the steps were taken to maintain public order in view of the prevailing situation.

Security presence remained heightened throughout the region, with additional deploy-

ments at key intersections and sensitive points, particularly in Srinagar. Senior police and civil officials were seen monitoring the situation on the ground.



Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday held in-depth deliberations on the prevailing security scenario in the UT of Jammu Kashmir.

All praises to Allah, the Most Merciful and the Most Generous.

Ramzan Appeal 2026
Ration Kits for Needy Families

Feeding a fasting family is among the most beloved deeds in the sight of Allah

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu.

As the blessed month of Ramzan 2026 approaches, Idara Falahi Aam Waqf humbly appeals for the distribution of Ramzan Ration Kits for poor and deserving families.

Distributing Approximately **300 Ration Kits**
Approximate cost of one kit ₹2,400/-
Each kit provides essential food items for the family.

Contribute Generously:
J&K BANK ACCOUNT
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Idara Falahi Aam Waqf
Alamgari Bazaar, Srinagar

PM Modi Speaks To Gulf Leaders, Conveys Support

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman, Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on Tuesday, and expressed concern over attacks on their countries during the ongoing conflict in West Asia, officials said.

During his telephonic conversations, Modi also discussed with these leaders the welfare and security of the Indian community residing in their countries.

"The prime minister spoke to three important leaders from



Modi expressed concern over the attacks in their respective countries and discussed the welfare and security of the Indian community residing there

the Gulf region on Tuesday afternoon. He had separate phone calls with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman, Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani," an official said. During his talks with the leaders, Modi expressed concern over the attacks in their respective countries and discussed the welfare and security of the Indian community residing there.

The phone calls took place in the wake of a coordinated offensive launched against Iran by the United States and Israel, in which the Islamic country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed. In retaliation, Iran has fired drones and missiles at Israel and US military installations around the Gulf, as also at the global business and aviation hubs of Dubai and Doha.

Over the last two days, Modi has spoken to the King of Bahrain and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, and condemned recent attacks on the two countries in violation of their sovereignty and territorial integrity, asserting that India stands in solidarity with their people in this difficult hour.

The prime minister has also spoken to King Abdullah II of Jordan and conveyed deep concern over the evolving situation in the region.

Modi has also spoken to United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Around 90 lakh Indians live in the Gulf and West Asia. About 10,000 Indian citizens live, study and work in Iran, while more than 40,000 live in Israel.

Currently, the airspace of West Asia is almost closed. With flight services disrupted due to the military escalation in West Asia, hundreds of Indians are stranded in Dubai, Doha and other key hub airports.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), which met on Sunday, expressed concern over the safety and security of the large Indian-expatriate community in the region.

The CCS also directed all departments concerned to take necessary and feasible measures to assist Indian nationals affected by the developments.

"It (CCS) expressed serious concern over the safety and security of the large Indian expatriate community in the region," an official statement issued after the CCS meeting said.

India has in the past successfully evacuated thousands of Indians from different parts of the world, including West Asia, amidst conflicts.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has said Indian missions across the region are in continuous contact with Indian citizens and helpines have been activated.

Khamenei was killed in a major attack on Iran launched by Israel and the United States on Saturday. His death was confirmed on Sunday.

US President Donald Trump has said the heavy and pin-point bombing on Iran would continue through the week or for as long as necessary.



1000's Stranded In Gulf As Iran War Complicates Routes Home

STEFANIE DAZIO

Berlin, Mar 3 (AP) Tens of thousands of people, from Romanian religious pilgrims to tourists and diplomats' family members, are stranded across the Middle East as the Iran war spreads throughout the region.

Major airlines have cancelled flights to and from the region, and airspace across the Gulf is closed. Some of those who are stuck have been forced to seek shelter amid airstrikes, while others are stuck on cruise ships that currently cannot sail through the Strait of Hormuz.

In a major move Monday, the US State Department urged all US citizens to leave more than a dozen Middle Eastern countries over the safety risk with the ongoing escalations that have dragged the region into significant chaos.

US Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Mora Namdar said on social platform X that Americans in countries including Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel should "DEPART NOW" using any available commercial transportation.

The State Department has also evacuated non-emergency personnel and families in six nations, adding the United Arab Emirates to its list Tuesday. The UAE, home to Dubai and Abu

Dhabi and long considered a safe corner of the Middle East, has been dragged into the Iran war with interceptions and attacks.

In Israel, meanwhile, the US ambassador told Americans there that the best way to leave is through Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

Mike Huckabee wrote on social media early Tuesday that the embassy was receiving lots of evacuation requests as embassy staff "are sheltering in place".

"There are VERY LIMITED options," he wrote. "Not sure when Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv will reopen." He advised Americans to take buses to the Egyptian resorts of Sharm el-Sheikh and Taba in southern Sinai.

Governments worldwide are scrambling to repatriate their citizens.

In Italy, the government has assisted with flights to Milan and Rome in the wake of mounting criticism against Defence Minister Guido Crosetto. The minister sparked a political controversy at home after being stuck in Dubai with his family during the initial phase of the US-Israeli attack on Iran.

Crosetto returned to Rome on Sunday on a military aircraft. The left-wing opposition has called for Crosetto's resignation, saying he should not have travelled to the Middle East during a crisis. Italian Premier Giorgia

Meloni has defended him.

An estimated 30,000 German tourists remained on cruise ships, in hotels or at closed airports in the Middle East, and the first plane from Dubai to Frankfurt, Germany, was expected to land Tuesday afternoon.

The German government is also seeking to charter planes at taxpayer expense to get vulnerable people — including ill travellers, children and pregnant people — back home.

France is also trying to organise the return of thousands of French people, the country's foreign affairs minister said Tuesday. An estimated 200,000 French people live in the region affected by the conflict, and authorities believe roughly 25,000 French citizens are currently visiting the area.

Early Tuesday, Romanian tourists arrived in Bucharest after travelling from Israel to Cairo to escape the conflict. Hundreds of Romanian Orthodox Church pilgrims were stranded in Israel while visiting Bethlehem on a trip led by Romanian priests when the war broke out. The group was forced to cut their trip short and return to Romania.

Pilgrim Mariana Muicaru said she was terrified during her time in Israel as rockets flew across the sky.

Israel Sends Troops Into Lebanon As Hezbollah Declares War

ABBY SEWELL & BASSEM MROUE

Beirut, Mar 3 (AP) Israel sent additional troops into southern Lebanon on Tuesday and ordered residents of more than 80 villages to evacuate as the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group said it is ready for an open war, escalating the already volatile situation in the region.

The latest exchanges started after Hezbollah fired rockets and drones early Monday toward northern Israel. Israel retaliated with a wave of airstrikes that killed 52 people in Lebanon, including a Palestinian militant and a Hezbollah intelligence official in Beirut's southern suburbs. More than 150 people were wounded and tens of thousands displaced.

Hezbollah said Tuesday morning it fired two salvos of rockets toward northern Israel while Israeli airstrikes overnight damaged a building housing Hezbollah's TV and radio stations. Beirut's southern suburbs were subjected to a series of strikes in the early afternoon on Tuesday that came without warning, and the Israeli military later said it targeted Hezbollah officials.

The Israeli military's Arabic spokesman, Avichay Adraee, issued a warning for residents of more than 80 villages and towns asking them to leave, adding that people should not return to these areas until further notice.

A senior Hezbollah official said that after more than a year of abiding by a ceasefire as Israel's strikes continued on Lebanon, the group's patience has ended, leaving it with no option "but to return to resistance" and fight an open war with Israel.

"The Zionist enemy wanted an open war, which it has not stopped since the ceasefire agreement," Mohamoud Komati said "So let it be an open war."

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun told the ambassadors of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the US, France and Egypt on Tuesday that Hezbollah has been firing rockets from areas north of the Litani River. The Lebanese government says it has disarmed He-

zbollah south of the river, along the border with Israel, and Lebanese troops are in full control of the area between the river and the border.

Shortly before Aoun spoke, the Israeli military said it had sent additional troops into southern Lebanon and took new positions on several strategic points close to the border, while Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said the Lebanese army was evacuating some of its positions along the border.

Adraee, the spokesman, posted on X that the troops' move inside Lebanon is part of efforts to bolster the forward defence system and create an additional layer of security.

A Lebanese military official confirmed to The Associated Press that Israeli troops moved into several areas in Lebanon, adding that the Lebanese army is "repositioning" in the area.

The UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon, known as UNIFIL, said its peacekeepers observed Israeli forces crossing into Lebanon in several areas Tuesday morning "before returning south of the Blue Line," referring to the border between the two countries.

Israel launched a ground invasion of Lebanon in October 2024 during its last war with Hezbollah. It withdrew from most of southern Lebanon after a US-brokered ceasefire halted the fighting in November 2024, but has continued to occupy five points on the Lebanese side of the border since then.

After the ceasefire, Israel continued to carry out near-daily strikes, primarily in southern Lebanon, saying that Hezbollah had been trying to rebuild its forces in the area.

Hezbollah launched rockets into Israel a day after the militant Palestinian group Hamas attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, triggering the war in Gaza. After months of low-level fighting, the conflict escalated into a full-scale war in September 2024 before a US-brokered ceasefire nominally halted the fighting two months later.

Fliers From Dubai Recollect Horrific Experience of Explosions

Press Trust Of India

Chennai: Whether the transit passenger or a family enjoying a holiday in Dubai—the armed conflict in middle east Asia threw a spanner in their plans to return home, with fliers stranded there amid explosions before resuming that long journey back home.

Those who arrived here from the conflict-hit region recollected sounds of explosions, and roads becoming empty during their brief stay in Dubai, after the US-Israel attack on Iran escalated with the latter hitting back at targets in UAE, among others.

Several passengers heaved a sigh of relief over the safe return on Tuesday and thanked the Central and state governments for the arrangements.

Shubha, a passenger from New York, who was supposed to return to Chennai on Sunday, described how the roads were

a deserted look following the conflict and added it was a "scary situation" in Dubai.

"Coming back here is like a freedom. I am coming from New York. I had a lay over in Dubai on Saturday. In the afternoon around 1 pm that day, they (Airline authorities) told that the Dubai air space has been closed" she told reporters at the airport here.

"Emirates Airlines and Dubai airport took care of us very well and immediately moved us to hotels. We were staying there in hotels. However, after reaching the hotel, we were told that some debris or something like a shrapnel fell at the Dubai airport causing some damage," she recalled.

"Scary situation prevailed during our stay as we could hear explosions every few hours. During nights we were able to see the missiles. Today, we are very happy to be back home, safe and alive," she said.

Chennai resident Karthik, who had gone with his family for a tour to Dubai said, "We went for a tour last Tuesday



(February 24). We were supposed to return on Saturday. But on Saturday we got the news about the closure of air space."

He said due to the airspace closure there might be some delays on the flight operations but never knew that the flights would be cancelled. "We returned to the

hotel on the same day and stayed there. We were able to hear sounds of missiles. Thankfully, we managed to get ticket for our journey today and came back to Chennai," he said.

Another passenger Syed Ali said, "upon hearing the news, several children started to cry due to the situation at the Dubai airport. However, the hotel authorities helped us a lot and accommodated us."

"Nearly 20,000 people were seen standing in long queues and were sent to various hotels. We should thank both the Central and state governments for taking steps for our safe return," Ali, who hails from Nagoor in Tamil Nadu said.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin had earlier instructed the Non-Resident Tamils Welfare and Rehabilitation Department to know the status of Tamils living in the Gulf countries. The government also established a 24-hour control room at the Tamil Nadu House in Delhi to offer assistance to the passengers.

China FM Tells Israel Counterpart Beijing Opposes Strikes On Iran

Associated Press

BEIJING: China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Israeli counterpart that Beijing was opposed to military strikes on Iran in a phone call on Tuesday, state media reported.

The war in the Middle East started over the weekend with US and Israeli strikes that killed the Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and has since spread across the wider region.

Beijing, a close partner of Tehran, has called for a ceasefire and condemned Khamenei's killing as a "serious violation".

Speaking to Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar,

Wang stayed clear of outright condemnation and said China advocated resolving issues through "dialogue and consultation", according to state news agency Xinhua.

"The recent Iran-US negotiations were making obvious progress... Regrettably, this process has been interrupted by gunfire," Wang said.

Reiterating Beijing's opposition to the US-Israeli military strikes, Wang said: "Force cannot truly solve problems — instead, it will only bring new problems and severe after-effects."

"China calls for an immediate halt to military operations to prevent the conflict from further spreading and getting out of control," he added.

Iran Buries Schoolchildren Killed In US-Israel Strike

KO Web Desk

Tehran - Funeral ceremonies were held on Tuesday for 168 victims of the US-Israeli airstrike that struck a school in the southern Iranian city of Minab in Hormozgan province on day one of the war.

168 schoolgirls and staff members of Shajareh Tayyebeh Girls' Elementary School were killed in a US-Israeli air strike on the first day of the war on Saturday. The strike also left 96 others wounded, many critically.

State television showed thousands of mourners filling a public square in Minab. Emotional scenes were on display with men and women trying to touch coffins of the young victims being carried in a large lorry.

The ceremony became both a tribute and a protest as anger over the deaths of young students spilled onto the streets.

From the stage, the mother of one of the slain students, identified as Atena, held up a printed collage of portraits that she called "a

document of American crimes".

UNESCO, in a statement said schools and students are protected under international humanitarian law.

"They died in the way of God," she said. The crowd responded with chants of "Death to America", "Death to Israel", and "No surrender".

Authorities in Tehran have called for international solidarity and action after multiple hospitals and schools were reportedly struck in recent air raids.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi posted a photograph on X, writing:

"These are graves being dug for more than 160 innocent young girls who were killed in the US-Israeli bombing of a primary school. Their bodies were torn to shreds."

"This is how 'rescue' promised by Trump looks in reality. From Gaza to Minab, innocents murdered in cold blood."

The ceremony quickly became both a tribute and a protest, as anger over the deaths of young students spilled onto the streets.



Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Monday that the US and Israel "continue to indiscriminately strike residential areas, sparing neither hospitals, schools, Red Crescent facilities, nor cultural monuments".

Both the US and Israel have maintained silence on the carnage. During its war in Gaza, Israel has repeatedly denied responsibility for deadly strikes on civilians before later revising its accounts in some cases, describing certain incidents as "accidental".

International agencies have expressed concern over the strike on an educational institution. UNESCO, in a statement shared on social media, said it was deeply troubled by the continued military action and reminded all sides that schools and students are protected under international humanitarian law. It stressed that attacks on places of learning threaten both lives and the right to education.

Under international humanitarian law, deliberately targeting educational institutions, hospitals, or other civilian infrastructure constitutes a war crime.

'Zero Rain In Jammu, Century-Low In Srinagar'

February 2026 Rewrites Rainfall Records Across J&K

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: February 2026 has emerged as one of the driest months in recorded history across Jammu and Kashmir, with several key meteorological stations either breaking all-time low rainfall records or coming dangerously close.

Data compiled by independent weatherman, Faizan Arif indicate an extraordinary rainfall deficit spanning the Valley, Jammu plains and the Chenab region.

Srinagar recorded just 5.3 mm of rainfall this February. With records available since 1901, this marks the lowest February rainfall since 1960, when 5.8 mm was recorded. The 2026 figure places the capital among the driest Februaries in more than a century.

Jammu Records Rare Zero-Rainfall February

In the Jammu division, Jammu city recorded 0 mm rainfall. Since records began in 1925, such a complete absence of rainfall in February has occurred only once before, in 1945. February 2026 thus becomes only the second zero-rainfall February in 101 years.

Katra in the Shivalik foothills also recorded 0 mm rainfall, its



lowest ever since records began in 1981, surpassing the previous record low of 5.0 mm in 2023.

North and South Kashmir Break Records

Kupwara recorded 17.7 mm, its lowest February rainfall since records began in 1977. The previous lowest was 21.8 mm in 1997.

Qazigund reported 13.0 mm, the lowest ever since 1963, sharply below the previous record of 31.6 mm set in 2020.

Pahalgam recorded 23.4 mm, narrowly breaking its earlier record low of 23.6 mm in 2020, making it the driest February since 1979.

Kokernag received 13.0 mm, the second lowest since records began in 1978, just above the all-time low of 11.8 mm recorded in 2020.

At Gulmarg, a high-altitude snow dependent station, 48.0

mm of precipitation was recorded. While not the lowest ever, it marks the lowest February since 1985, when 24.8 mm was observed.

Chenab Valley Sees Sharp Departures

Banihal recorded 8.4 mm, its lowest February rainfall since records began in 1962, breaking the previous record low of 27.6 mm in 2020 by a wide margin.

Batote saw 18.8 mm, also its lowest ever since 1978, surpassing the previous record of 38.6 mm in 2020.

Bhaderwah recorded 49.0 mm, making it the third lowest February since 1978, after 32.8 mm in 1985 and the all-time low of 18.8 mm in 2020.

Emerging Pattern of Extreme Dry Winters

The 2026 figures underscore an alarming pattern of increas-

MeT Forecasts Light Rain, Snow in Higher Reaches

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR:The Meteorological Centre Srinagar has issued a fresh forecast for Jammu and Kashmir, predicting partly cloudy to generally cloudy conditions with brief spells of light rain in the plains and light snowfall over higher reaches in the coming days.

According to the advisory, from March 3 to 6, weather across the Union Territory will remain partly cloudy, with a brief spell of light snow over isolated higher reaches on March 4.

Between March 7 and 9, conditions are likely to turn generally cloudy, with light rain in the plains and light

snowfall at higher altitudes as isolated to scattered places.

From March 10 to 11, the weather is expected to be partly to generally cloudy, with light rain and snow at scattered locations.

The department has predicted generally dry weather from March 12 to 14, followed by generally cloudy conditions again on March 15 and 16.

In its advisory, the MeT has asked farmers to continue farm operations as planned.

It has also forecast a further rise in daytime temperatures by 1 to 2 degrees Celsius at most places over the next four days. Thereafter, a fall of 2 to 4 degrees Celsius at many places is expected.

ingly dry winters across Jammu and Kashmir, particularly during February, which traditionally contributes significantly to seasonal precipitation.

Climatologists note that repeated record breaking lows in recent years signal a shift in winter precipitation trends, with

potential implications for agriculture, hydropower generation and water security in the region.

With several districts logging either historic lows or near record deficits, February 2026 stands out as a defining month in the region's meteorological history.

LG, CM Extend Holi Greetings

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has extended his heartiest greetings to the people on the eve of Holi which will be celebrated tomorrow on March 04.

In a message, the Lieutenant Governor said: "On the festive occasion of Holi, I convey my warm greetings to the people. I hope that the festival of colours, which is celebrated with traditional fervour, heralds happiness and success for all."

"May this festival of colours bring joy and prosperity in the society and foster the spirit of harmony amongst our citizens," Sinha said.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also extended his warm greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Holi.

In his felicitation message, the Chief Minister described Holi as a vibrant celebration that symbolises togetherness, joy and the triumph of harmony over discord.

He expressed hope that the "Festival of Colors" would further strengthen communal harmony, promote mutual respect and deepen the enduring bonds of brotherhood across the region. The Chief Minister prayed for sustained peace, prosperity and progress in Jammu and Kashmir, and expressed confidence that the festival would usher in renewed hope and happiness for all residents. (Observer News Service)



Protests in Rajouri Against Killing of Ayatollah Khamenei

RAJOURI/JAMMU: Protests erupted in various parts of Jammu and Kashmir Rajouri district on Tuesday against the assassination of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei.

In Budhal, residents gathered in front of the Sheikh-ul-Alam Masjid to stage a demonstration and condemned the joint military action by the US and Israel in Iran.

Raising slogans against Israel and the US, they termed the attack a violation of international law and an act of aggression against the Muslim world.

They also expressed concern over escalating tensions in the Middle East and called for peace and respect for sovereignty.

Senior PDP leader Mohammad Farooq Inqilabi addressed the gathering and described the killing as "highly unfortunate and dangerous for global peace".

He said "targeting the leadership of a sovereign nation was against international norms and could have serious consequences for regional and global stability."

In the main town of Rajouri, Muslim youth organised an "Iran Solidarity march".

The protestors assembled on Bela road and marched through the town, raising slogans against the US and Israel. Some protesters were seen burning posters of the American and Israeli leadership during the demonstration.

Protests were also held in Kotranka in the district. Carrying placards and banners, the protestors gathered in the town centre and denounced foreign intervention. They also called for adherence to international law.

Massive protests have rocked Kashmir over the assassination of Ayatollah Khamenei in a joint US-Israel operation early Saturday. (Observer News Service)

Over 17 Lakh Kanals of State Land Under Encroachment in J&K

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir has recorded encroachment of over 17 lakh kanals of state land, with corresponding entries expunged from revenue records, while more than 75,000 kanals have been transferred to various government departments and agencies since 2019, according to official data.

"There are 1,00,06,163.9 kanals of total state land in Jammu and Kashmir, of which 17,27,246.5 kanals of state land is under encroachment," the data revealed.

The government shared division-wise details of state,

government and JDA land under encroachment, the steps taken for retrieval and regularisation, and land allotted to institutions and government departments, including central agencies, after 2019.

In the Kashmir division, a total of 16,54,709.9 kanals of state land have been recorded, out of which 3,27,198.5 kanals were under encroachment, the data said. It said entries pertaining to 3,27,199 kanals have been expunged from revenue records.

Baramulla district accounts for the highest encroached land at 81,327.65 kanals, followed by Kupwara

(52,698.1 kanals), Pulwama (42,730.8 kanals) and Anantnag (36,984 kanals). Srinagar district reported 13,862.95 kanals under encroachment, it said.

In the Jammu division, against a total of 83,51,454 kanals and 61 marlas of state land, 14,00,048 kanals and 65 marlas were reported under encroachment, it said. The same quantum of land has corresponding entries expunged in revenue records.

Rajouri district recorded the highest encroachment at 2,73,848 kanals and 12 marlas, followed by Reasi (2,26,857 kanals and 6 marlas), Ramban (1,73,832 kanals),

Jammu (1,45,487 kanals and 6 marlas) and Kathua (1,30,403 kanals and 1.5 marlas).

The overall grand total across both divisions stands at over 14 lakh kanals under encroachment in the Jammu division and over 3.27 lakh kanals in the Kashmir division.

Giving details about land transferred since 2019 to various government departments, the officials said that 68,190 kanals and 19 marlas of land have been transferred to state and UT government departments and agencies, without charging transfer value in accordance with delegated powers.

Minister Sharma Greet People on Holi

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA), Transport, IT, Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma extended warm greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Holi.

In his message, the Minister said that Holi, the vibrant festival of colours, symbolizes the victory of truth over falsehood and good over evil. He noted that the festival, celebrated with great enthusiasm across the country, reinforces the spirit of unity, love, compassion and brotherhood among communities and strengthens the bonds of togetherness in society.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
JAMMU AND KASHMIR SERVICES SELECTION BOARD
Muthi, Akhnoor Road, Jammu/Zam Zam Complex Rambagh, Srinagar | www.jkssb.nic.in

NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of all concerned candidates that the Driving Test scheduled to be held on 03-03-2026, at State Motor Garages, Bemina, Srinagar stands postponed. The Driving Test for these candidates shall now be conducted on 25-03-2026 as per the earlier schedule/batching given in their Admit cards. The Admit cards already issued for 03-03-2026 shall remain valid for the rescheduled date.

Further:

- The Driving Test for Jammu centre-based candidates shall be conducted as per the existing schedule at State Motor Garages, New Plot, Jammu and Transport Department site at Nagrota, Jammu.
- The Driving Test for candidates scheduled on 05-03-2026 and onwards shall be conducted as per the already notified schedule.
- All concerned Candidates are advised to take note of the above.

No: JKSSB-COE0EXAM/1/2026 04 (7833420) Reyaz Ahmad Malik (JKAS)
Dated:02.03.2026 DPK-11517-25 Controller of Examinations
DT: 03/03/2026 J&K Services Selection Board

GANDHI MEMORIAL COLLEGE SRINAGAR
(NAAC ACCREDITED)
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Tender for Operation/Running College Canteen 2026-27.
e-NIT NO: E-GMC/2026/324 Dated: 28-02-2026

Subject: - Invitation of e-Tenders for Operating/Running the Canteen at Gandhi Memorial College, Srinagar.

For and on behalf of Hon'ble Lt. Governor of UT of Jammu & Kashmir, e-tenders under two cover system are invited through Principal, Gandhi Memorial College, Srinagar from interested parties viz. Reputed Hoteliers/Caterers/Canteen Vendors for running the college canteen for a period of minimum one year (2026-27) from the date of award of the contract, on "as is where is" basis. The Tender documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, and detailed terms and conditions of contract can be seen/downloaded from the website www.jktenders.gov.in or https://www.gandhicollegesrinagar.edu.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

Name of the Work: Operation/Running of College canteen within the college premises		
1.	Date of Publication	28/02/2026.
2.	Period of downloading of Tender documents:	28/02/2026 to 14/03/2026.
3.	Tender Bid Submission start date	28/02/2026 from 11:00 AM
4.	Tender Bid Submission end date	14/03/2026 up to 5:00 PM
5.	Date of opening of EOI Bid online for Technical Evaluation	16/03/2026

Ref No: GMC/26/5114 DPK-11486-25 Principal
Dated: 28-02-2026 DT: 03/03/2026 Gandhi Memorial College, Srinagar.

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KO VIEW

A Skyline Out of Sync

Srinagar has placed a corrugated metal roof on a 600-year-old mosque, and many locals feel hurt and angry. They say it looks like a garden shed sitting on top of a heritage prayer hall, and that reaction comes from a deep bond with the place.

Aali Masjid stands on the Eidgah ground, where people gather every Ramzan for prayers and reflection. Generations of families have stood there shoulder to shoulder, returning year after year to the same space. They come for faith and for a sense of continuity. The mosque connects them to their elders through its wooden beams and old stone walls. That connection now feels disturbed.

The new green roof stands out sharply against the old skyline. It does not sit well with the traditions of Kashmiri sacred architecture. These mosques once relied on fine woodwork, balanced proportions, and materials chosen with care. The present roof ignores that history and gives the impression of a rushed and low-cost fix.

Conservation work calls for restraint and respect for what already exists. In this case, workers removed the traditional roofing and fixed sheets of corrugated iron in its place. They also used cement patches where lime plaster once allowed the walls to breathe. Conservation experts often explain that cement traps moisture inside historic walls.

Over time, trapped dampness weakens stone and damages timber, and the harm becomes visible after a few seasons of rain and snow.

This issue matters even more because Srinagar holds recognition from UNESCO as a creative city for crafts. That honour celebrates living traditions such as walnut carving and cedar joinery. The mosque reflected that same craft culture, and local artisans still practise those skills today.

The new roof breaks that visual link between the monument and the wider craft heritage of the city.

Heritage tourism supports many livelihoods in the valley. Visitors travel here to see places that retain their historic character and local identity. When a landmark adopts materials that belong to a hardware store shelf, it loses part of its appeal.

The city cannot promote its creative heritage while altering its important monuments in ways that erase their original character.

Some argue that any repair is better than decay, but restoration depends on the right methods and materials. Poor repair can damage a structure more than time and weather ever could. Each rainy season may now push moisture deeper into the walls and increase the risk of long-term damage.

People also want clear answers. Who selected these materials and approved the use of corrugated roof? Were conservation architects and traditional craftsmen consulted before work began?

The public deserves transparency when changes affect a monument that belongs to the community.

Sacred spaces here form part of a living inheritance. This mosque stands at the heart of that tradition. Replacing its traditional roof with industrial sheets weakens the bond between the building and the people who value it.

It also sends a troubling message to younger generations about how the past should be treated.

Authorities still have the chance to restore the mosque with materials that match its original design. They can involve local artisans who understand lime plaster and traditional roofing systems.

With thoughtful action, they can ensure that heritage remains real and meaningful rather than turning into a surface image without depth.

CASH COURSE

Read This Before You Buy Anything

Gold in War

As wars expand and governments boost spending, investors turn to gold to protect savings from inflation and currency strain.

Irshad Mushtaq

War transforms financial behaviour with speed and force. Investors watch markets swing, currencies weaken, and public debt surge as governments fund military campaigns. Fear rises when headlines signal escalation, and capital moves toward assets that feel secure and universal.

Gold attracts that capital because it stands outside political control. A government can print currency and expand supply during conflict, and that expansion often fuels inflation. Investors understand this chain reaction. Rising prices erode purchasing power, and households search for protection that holds real value.

Gold offers that protection through scarcity. Mining adds limited supply each year, and production demands time and investment. That constraint builds confidence during periods of heavy public spending and monetary expansion. Investors treat gold as a hedge against inflation and currency depreciation, and demand climbs as uncertainty deepens.

Central banks reinforce this trend. Many countries increase gold reserves during geopolitical tension to reduce exposure to rival currencies. Institutional buying supports price momentum, and retail investors follow the signal. Higher demand from governments, funds, and families lifts prices further.

History shows a consistent pattern. Major wars and global crises often coincide with rising gold prices. The logic rests on human instinct and financial prudence. People seek assets that preserve value when political systems face stress.

Gold serves as insurance within a portfolio rather than a vehicle for rapid gains. Financial planners often recommend a five to fifteen percent allocation, depending on risk appetite and long-term goals. That measured exposure cushions portfolios during turbulence and supports stability when other assets fluctuate. War tests confidence in paper money. Gold rises during those moments because investors prioritize scarcity, independence, and purchasing power.

That dynamic explains why conflict often strengthens gold and secures its place in serious investment strategy.

The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial educator.

India's Moment to Lead

Escalating tensions among the United States, Israel, and Iran threaten energy flows, financial stability, and regional security. India faces real risks, and it also holds real influence to press for ceasefire, reform, and a new global balance.



Lalit Gargg

The global order is undergoing a profound shift, and power equations are changing faster than institutions can adjust.

Tensions among the United States, Israel, and Iran signal more than another regional flare-up, as they expose a deeper imbalance in a system where old arrangements weaken and new alignments remain unsettled.

Direct clashes or proxy battles among major powers send shockwaves through every continent, and the impact touches economies, politics, and daily life in equal measure.

Energy supplies tighten, shipping routes face disruption, currencies fluctuate, and financial markets react with volatility that unsettles investors and governments alike.

West Asia holds a central place in the global energy architecture, and any military escalation near the Strait of Hormuz threatens a substantial share of the world's oil shipments.

A blockage or sustained disruption in that narrow passage would send crude prices sharply upward, placing immediate strain on energy-importing nations such as India.

India depends heavily on imported oil to fuel transportation, agriculture, manufacturing, and power generation, and rising crude prices would increase the national import bill significantly.

Higher fuel costs would push up transportation expenses, raise fertilizer prices for farmers, increase electricity tariffs, and elevate production costs for industry, creating inflationary pressure that affects households and small businesses.

Global financial markets already reflect anxiety about geopolitical risk, and a prolonged conflict would discourage investment and slow economic expansion across developing economies. Countries with limited fiscal space would face tighter budgets, weaker currencies, and greater difficulty funding social and infrastructure programs.

The growing confrontation between Washington and Tehran represents a critical test of the evolving world order, because it pits military strength against the need for diplomatic maturity.

The United States views itself as a global leader, and leadership demands responsibility alongside power, especially when actions influence energy flows and regional stability.

Iran remains a key oil producer, and its internal stability supports the functioning of global markets that developing countries rely upon for growth and fiscal balance.

Escalation through targeted strikes on leadership figures has already intensified reactions within Iran and among Muslim-majority nations, increasing volatility in West Asia and heightening the risk of broader polarization.

Reports of hundreds killed and thousands injured in recent exchanges highlight the human cost of strategic decisions, and civilian suffering deepens anger that fuels further escalation.

Such instability would not remain confined to West Asia, as it would shape maritime security in the Indian Ocean, affect South Asian geopolitics, and alter diplomatic balances far beyond the region.

War inflicts economic damage, and it also erodes social trust and weakens cultural exchange between societies that benefit from engagement. A rapidly transforming world requires coexistence, dialogue, and multilateral cooperation guided by wisdom rather than retaliation and shared responsibility rather than dominance.

The conflict holds ideological and geopolitical dimensions that extend beyond immediate security concerns, especially after the polarization that followed the Ukraine crisis. Sustained instability in West Asia would complicate the strategic calculations of countries in the Global South that

without forcing awkward or artificial substitutes.

In the case of Kashmiri, however, this process is often viewed with suspicion.

Code-mixing, especially when accommodating technical, academic, or modern concepts, is treated as linguistic failure. But the reality is simple: Kashmiri has not organically developed vocabulary for many modern domains such as technology, higher education, psychology, or administration.

When people slip English or Urdu words into Kashmiri, they're just filling in what's missing. It's the language trying to keep up and stay useful in a fast-changing world.

Ironically, this adaptability is precisely what Kashmiri purism resists. In certain linguistic circles, loanwords are framed as signs of the language's "death." But purism rarely stems from

confidence. More often, it emerges from insecurity, particularly insecurity about identity.

In places like Srinagar, language is bound to cultural survival, political history, collective trauma, and religious identity. When a language carries such symbolic weight, any external influence can feel like a threat. Purity then becomes a form of emotional and cultural defense rather than a linguistic necessity.

What this perspective overlooks is simple: languages die because people stop using them.

There is also a widening gap between the Kashmiri that is spoken and the Kashmiri that is institutionally endorsed. The version preserved in textbooks, academic writing, and formal literary spaces often bears little resemblance to the language people actually use. The living language — fluid, hybrid, adaptive — is dismissed



India's civilizational ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which views the world as one family, offers a philosophical foundation for practical initiatives that promote peace and shared progress.

maintain diverse partnerships and seek balanced engagement.

India exemplifies this delicate balancing act through strong strategic ties with the United States and Europe, historical and cultural connections with Iran, and deepening defense and technological cooperation with Israel.

An overt alignment with any single side would constrain India's multidimensional foreign policy and reduce its flexibility at a time when strategic autonomy offers clear advantages.

Another major concern lies in the presence of nearly nine million Indian citizens working in the Middle East, whose safety and livelihoods matter deeply for families and for the national economy.

Remittances from this region amount to billions of dollars annually, and heightened conflict would threaten employment, disrupt income flows, and place additional strain on domestic growth.

Shipping routes through the Red Sea and the Gulf remain essential for India's energy imports and merchandise exports, and rising tensions would increase insurance premiums and transportation costs.

India currently ranks among the fastest-growing major economies, and sustained geopolitical instability would complicate its development trajectory through higher import costs and investor caution.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has pursued a policy of multi-aligned diplomacy that strengthens ties with major powers while preserving independent decision-making.

Strategic partnerships with the United States have expanded, energy cooperation with Russia continues, and relations with West Asian nations remain balanced, reinforcing India's credibility as a bridge-builder.

India holds the presidency of BRICS, and Iran's recent inclusion in the grouping offers a platform to amplify the voice of emerging economies. This forum provides an opportunity to advocate for ceasefire, structured dialogue, and equitable multilateral solutions that reflect the priorities of the Global South.

The perceived limitations of the United Nations in managing great-power rivalries have expanded the space for middle powers to influence outcomes through coalition-building and principled diplomacy. India's historical experience with colonialism and Cold War alignments equips it with insight into balanced engagement and the value of inclusive global governance.

South Asia presents its own challenges, including tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan that affect regional stability and security

calculations in New Delhi. Simultaneous turbulence in West Asia and South Asia would create strategic pressure on India along multiple fronts, increasing the risk of extremism and illicit arms proliferation in volatile environments.

A clear path forward requires prioritizing ceasefire and sustained multilateral dialogue supported by credible guarantors and regional stakeholders. Enduring peace emerges through political compromise and mutual respect, while reliance on military escalation deepens divisions and prolongs instability.

Accelerated investment in renewable energy and alternative technologies would reduce dependence on volatile oil markets and strengthen economic security for import-dependent nations. Reform of global institutions would enhance their legitimacy and effectiveness, ensuring that decision-making reflects equitable representation rather than great-power dominance.

Regional platforms such as BRICS, the G20, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can assume more active roles in conflict de-escalation and development coordination.

India's civilizational ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which views the world as one family, offers a philosophical foundation for practical initiatives that promote peace and shared progress.

Diversifying energy sources, strengthening defense self-reliance, and advancing digital and green economic transitions would reinforce India's strategic confidence amid global turbulence.

Active engagement with major and regional powers would protect national interests while contributing constructively to global stability.

History demonstrates that military victories provide temporary advantage, whereas sustainable peace rests on justice, dialogue, and cooperation among nations.

A stable and humane global order requires a deliberate shift away from confrontation and toward coexistence guided by responsibility and foresight.

The stakes stand high for every nation, and India occupies a position where its choices can influence outcomes beyond its borders.

Leadership today demands clarity, balance, and commitment to peace, and India holds both the capacity and the credibility to press the world toward that necessary path.

The author is a Delhi-based journalist and columnist who writes on geopolitics, public policy, and global affairs. He can be reached at lalitgarg11@gmail.com.

Letter to Editor

The Problem With Linguistic Purism in Kashmir

One of the reasons I attribute to the decline of the Kashmiri language is its failure to evolve. It feels stagnant, almost frozen in time. We seem more invested in preserving it in its "pure" form than in allowing it to flow, adapt, and grow with the people who speak it.

Three years ago, in one of my early college lectures, a professor introduced us to the concept of loanwords and explained why the English language has been so successful. Among many reasons, one stood out: its openness to adopting words from other languages.

Loanwords are terms a language borrows from elsewhere. For example, pariah in English. The meaning and context remain intact. One of the greatest advantages of loanwords is that they expand a speaker's ability to express ideas. They allow a language to accommodate new realities, experiences, and concepts

without forcing awkward or artificial substitutes.

In the case of Kashmiri, however, this process is often viewed with suspicion.

Code-mixing, especially when accommodating technical, academic, or modern concepts, is treated as linguistic failure. But the reality is simple: Kashmiri has not organically developed vocabulary for many modern domains such as technology, higher education, psychology, or administration.

When people slip English or Urdu words into Kashmiri, they're just filling in what's missing. It's the language trying to keep up and stay useful in a fast-changing world.

Ironically, this adaptability is precisely what Kashmiri purism resists. In certain linguistic circles, loanwords are framed as signs of the language's "death." But purism rarely stems from

confidence. More often, it emerges from insecurity, particularly insecurity about identity.

In places like Srinagar, language is bound to cultural survival, political history, collective trauma, and religious identity. When a language carries such symbolic weight, any external influence can feel like a threat. Purity then becomes a form of emotional and cultural defense rather than a linguistic necessity.

What this perspective overlooks is simple: languages die because people stop using them.

There is also a widening gap between the Kashmiri that is spoken and the Kashmiri that is institutionally endorsed. The version preserved in textbooks, academic writing, and formal literary spaces often bears little resemblance to the language people actually use. The living language — fluid, hybrid, adaptive — is dismissed

as incorrect or inferior.

Over time, this creates alienation. When speakers are made to feel that their everyday Kashmiri is "wrong," they gradually distance themselves from it.

By prioritising an idealised institutional form over the living tongue, we risk turning Kashmiri into an artifact, something to be archived and admired rather than actively spoken.

Preservation matters, so do structure and history. But preservation without evolution leads to stagnation.

If Kashmiri is to survive, it must be allowed to absorb, adapt, and reflect contemporary life.

Otherwise, in trying too hard to protect it, we may be ensuring its silence.

Sincerely,

Musaib Bilal
musaibbilal.216061@gmail.com

A Leader Beyond Sect

As millions gather to mourn Imam Khamenei, something remarkable is happening. People are talking about unity again, and this time it feels different.



Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat

Imam Khamenei's martyrdom has renewed focus on healing the divide between Shia and Sunni Muslims.

Both communities stand on the same five pillars, professing one God and Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] through the shahada.

They pray five times daily, give zakat, fast during Ramzan, and make pilgrimage to Mecca. Sure, they differ in doctrine and practice, but their foundation runs far deeper than their distinctions.

This matters enormously when we look at Palestine.

Almost all Palestinians are Sunni Muslims, but Iran stood alone in openly backing their cause, even when the world turned up the pressure.

The United States and Israel targeted Iran precisely because of that stance.

Imam Khamenei gave his life standing by Palestine, and that choice has resonated across communities.

Sunni Muslims worldwide are paying attention now. All fifty-three Islamic nations are watching closely, sensing this moment could

revive Muslim unity.

Let's put this in perspective. Every religion has its internal differences. Christianity has its Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant traditions. Buddhism flows through Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. Hinduism embraces Shaivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism. Only Muslim divide just happens to dominate modern headlines.

But look outside right now. Millions of Sunni Muslims are marching in grief, mourning Khamenei's death at the hands of the United States and Israel.

These gatherings are doing something historic. They're bridging a divide that has separated Muslims for generations.

We keep moving forward by following the path of salaf-e-saliheen and our revered Imams. Imam Hussain's sacrifice lights the way for us. He stood against tyranny and corruption, defending truth, justice and honour with his life.

Today's leaders carry that same commitment, fighting for Palestinian children in Gaza. Many Muslim nations are opening their lands to support Iran fully. The old Shia-Sunni storyline is fading.

Imam Khamenei kept Islam's true philosophy alive, nearly fourteen centuries after Karbala.

Think about that battle for a moment. Karbala happened in 680 AD, just forty-eight years after the Prophet's passing. Two paths emerged there: Hussainiyat representing truth, and Yazidiyat representing falsehood.

We still see Yazidiyat today, pressing



against Hussainiyat in new forms. But follow-

WE TREASURE WHAT THE PROPHET, HIS COMPANIONS AND Imam Hussain taught us. Imam Khamenei walked that same road, unwavering until his death at eighty-six. He did it all to defend Sunni Arab Palestine. That sacrifice stays with us forever.

ers of Islam and Hussain are uniting under one banner.

The United States, Israel and their allies embody modern Yazidiyat through oppression and global terrorism.

Imam Khamenei's sacrifice reminds us of something profound: every day is Ashura, and every land is Karbala.

This message belongs to all of us, regardless of community or background.

We treasure what the Prophet, his companions and Imam Hussain taught us. Imam Khamenei walked that same road, unwavering until his death at eighty-six.

He did it all to defend Sunni Arab Palestine. That sacrifice stays with us forever.

— The author is an environmental activist and policy commentator. He is the founder and chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Climate Action Group and a member of the J&K State Audit Advisory Board.



WE STILL SEE YAZIDIYAT TODAY, PRESSING AGAINST Hussainiyat in new forms. But followers of Islam and Hussain are uniting under one banner.

Love That Burned Through Divides

When Shia and Sunni neighbours stood shoulder to shoulder in shared sorrow.



Dabirah Hassan

The voice came through the loudspeaker at the Imambargah just as I had drifted into sleep.

It was the first of March, a Sunday night like any other until it wasn't.

"Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un," the announcer said, his words breaking apart as he spoke them. We belong to Allah and to Him we return.

I heard the tremor in his throat before I understood the meaning. My hand was already reaching for my phone before my mind caught up.

The news was everywhere. Our Imam had been martyred.

I lay there for a moment, trying to convince myself this was the kind of nightmare that dissolves when you sit up and switch on the light.

But outside, the crying had already started. It came from the house next door, then the street beyond, then spreading outward until the whole town seemed to be making the same wounded sound.

Grief became something you could breathe. It filled the rooms and leaked under doors and hung in the air like weather.

When I finally went outside, I found the yard in Budgam had turned into an ocean. Thousands of people stood shoulder to shoulder, though calling them a crowd feels wrong.

They moved as one body, sharing one pulse. Children gripped their mothers with the particular terror of those who sense the grown-ups have lost their certainty. Old men leaned on walking sticks and crutches, refusing to stay home because love had summoned them and love does not accept excuses about bad knees or tired hearts.

I watched a photograph of him being passed through the crowd, people pressing their lips to the glass as though they might taste something of him there.

The image was just paper and ink, but in that moment it carried everything that was left. But what struck me most was who stood beside me.

Our Sunni neighbours had come too, their faces wet with the same grief, their shoulders shaking with the same sense of loss.

The lines that usually divide us suddenly felt pointless, like rules no one cared to follow



HE WARNED US AGAINST WOUNDING OUR SUNNI BROTHERS WITH OUR words, against letting difference become division. Many Sunni Muslims found their way to him through this sincerity, recognizing in his voice the sound of someone who meant what he said.

anymore.

In that moment, we were not Shia or Sunni, not labels or sides. We were simply people who loved the same man, and that shared love washed away the boundaries we usually hold

on to.

Then we began walking toward Lal Chowk. Fifteen kilometers of road stretched ahead, though distance is a funny thing when your heart is on fire. Some people had walked thirty kilometers that morning just to be here, their feet blistered and their devotion intact.

I walked next to men who were crying and not even trying to hide it. Their faces gave everything away, and they let it. We usually think being strong means keeping it together and not breaking down in public.

That day showed me something else. Sometimes, crying is strength. Sometimes, tears say what we cannot put into words. They show that what you had was real, and that losing it hurts because it mattered.

I kept thinking of Amir Khusro, the poet who wrote about love turning the world into flame. Kashmir felt like that in those hours. Something had caught light in us, and the fire was spreading through streets and squares and hearts, consuming everything it touched.

I grew up with his name in my mouth before I knew what it meant. Allahu Akbar. Khamenei,

rehbar. Zinda hai Khoemnie zinda hai, rehbar ki shakal mai zinda hai.

These were the sounds of my childhood, chanted in streets and whispered in homes, passed down like family stories.

I never met him, and never stood in a room where he stood. Still, the love deepened as I grew older.

His photograph hung in places where people went to mend their broken hearts. His speeches fed something hungry in us. His books opened doors we did not know were closed.

The strange thing about this kind of devotion is that it travels.

After his passing, the world watched processions rise in cities I will never visit. Messages came from Hindus and Sikhs condemning the assassination, tears falling from eyes that had never called him leader.

Truth, it seems, announces itself in ways that do not require translation.

People recognized something in him that went beyond the labels we usually hide behind.

I have spent the hours since asking myself

what that special quality really was. His life was not about glamour or show. He lived in a simple way and spoke in a calm, assuring voice.

He treated children with the warmth and patience of a grandfather, and spoke to women with real respect, as people who run families and society every single day.

His voice never wavered when he spoke for Palestinians, for the oppressed, and for those whom power had tried to silence. While others chose safety, he stood where the standing was hard.

He quoted Imam Hussain's refusal to bow to tyranny, and he lived those words rather than wearing them as decoration.

I saw a video once of a young Iranian girl who had no grandfather left alive. Her parents told her that the Rehbar was her grandfather instead, and they took her to meet him.

She sat in his presence and cried, and he held her until the crying stopped.

This was not politics. This was a man who understood that power means nothing if you cannot comfort a child.

He spoke to women as builders of civilization, rather than ornaments. He spoke to youth as the ones who would inherit the future, urging them to prepare their bodies and minds for the work ahead.

His constant theme was unity between Shia and Sunni, as a matter of love and religious obligation.

He warned us against wounding our Sunni brothers with our words, against letting difference become division.

Many Sunni Muslims found their way to him through this sincerity, recognizing in his voice the sound of someone who meant what he said.

In his late eighties, he carried himself with the energy of a much younger man. He compared himself to the cypress tree that keeps its spring colours even when autumn comes, and the comparison fit.

Vitality shone from him, as he stayed among his people rather than hiding behind walls. He shared their fate, and left this world with his head high, unbowed by violence or fear.

Martyrdom has not ended him. If anything, it has made him more visible.

He is absent from our sight now, but present in the conscience of those who loved him.

His voice continues, perhaps louder than before.

We weep, but underneath the weeping lives a certainty that the blood of martyrs does not close a story. It opens one.

— The author is the Multimedia Lead at Kashmir Observer. She can be reached at dabeerhasan121@gmail.com.

Anxiety Risk Shaped By 58 Genetic Variants, Study Finds



Press Trust Of India

Researchers have found 58 genetic variants linked to an increased risk of anxiety, suggesting that the disorder is not driven by a "single anxiety gene". The researchers, led by those from Texas A&M University in the US, said that anxiety disorders are influenced by genetic variants from across the human genome, with each variant inherited subtly changing an individual's genetic risk for developing anxiety-related conditions. The findings are consistent with the genetic architecture for common medical conditions like hypertension and clinical depression, they said.

The 58 genetic variants analysed in the study, published in the journal Nature Genetics, pointed to 66 genes that the researchers said appear to influence how the brain responds to stress and threat.

The team also found a strong genetic overlap between anxiety disorders and related traits including depression, neuroticism, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide attempts - the results reinforced decades of clinical observations, they said.

"Anxiety disorders and their underlying sources of genetic risk have been understudied compared to other psychiatric conditions, so this study substantially advances this critical knowledge," senior author Jack Hettema, professor from the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Texas A&M University, said.

"Anxiety disorders have long been recognised as heritable, but until now we lacked a solid link between anxiety and the specific genetic factors involved," Hettema said. The researchers analysed genetic data from 122,341 people diagnosed with major anxiety disorders and 729,881 without.

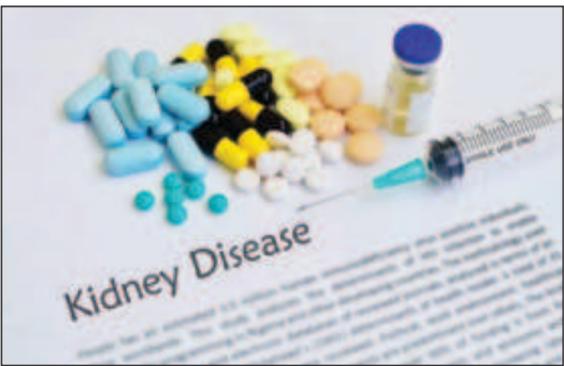
The authors "identified 58 independent genome-wide significant risk variants and 66 genes with robust biological support." They also found a "substantial genetic correlation between (anxiety) and depression, neuroticism and other internalising phenotypes." The analysis highlighted genes involved in the regulation of the 'GABA' brain chemical as a potential mechanism critical in one's genetic risk of anxiety - GABA helps calm down activity in the nervous system.

GABA, or gamma-aminobutyric acid, is already targeted by several existing anti-anxiety medications, and thus, the study provides converging evidence for brain circuits and biochemical systems long suspected to be involved in anxiety, the researchers said.

They added that genes alone do not seal a person's fate.

"Our discoveries highlight underlying biological vulnerability for anxiety, but they don't diminish the profound influence of lived experience," co-author Brad Verhulst, research assistant professor in the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Texas A&M University, said.

Study Links Chronic Kidney Disease With Cognitive Impairment



Press Trust Of India

An advancing of chronic kidney disease may be linked to an increase in cognitive impairment, such as problems with attention, processing speed and executive function, according to a study.

The findings, published in The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open, underscores that severity of chronic kidney disease could be a risk factor for cognitive decline.

Chronic kidney disease is a long-term, progressive loss of kidney function - where kidneys are not able to purify blood - often lasting more than three months.

Researchers, including those from Tulane University in the US, examined over 5,600 participants aged 21-79, analysing blood and urine samples for kidney function, and a cognitive function assessment for brain function over six years.

"In this cohort study of 5,607 participants with CKD (chronic kidney disease), a higher urinary protein to creatinine ratio (in a urine test) was associated with impairments in attention and processing speed as well as executive function,"

the authors wrote.

They said that studies are looking at physiological processes linking chronic kidney disease with cognitive dysfunction, with some suggesting credible hypotheses.

The team suggested that because chronic kidney disease can exacerbate hypertension, consequences of the condition's progression could explain the increased risk of cognitive impairment experienced among patients.

Evidence also suggests that vascular links with dementia may be more prominent among patients with long-term kidney dysfunction, compared with the general population, they said.

The researchers added that accounting for clinical factors, including hypertension, did not entirely explain the link between chronic kidney disease and cognitive decline, indicating that other mechanisms may be involved.

Chronic kidney disease-related conditions, such as abnormal bone mineral metabolism, chronic inflammation and oxidative stress, sleep disorders and anaemia, may also contribute to the observed associations between kidney and brain health as shown in prior studies, the authors said.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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Notice Dated: 02.03.2026

Whereas, vide Notification No.FSC/Exam/2025/03 dated 20.05.2025, application forms for appearing in Secretariat Assistant Course, Foundation Course & J&K Secretariat Training Course Departmental Examination were invited from eligible candidates. In response 4253 (SAC-80, FC-250 & SATC-3825) application forms were received and:

Whereas, on scrutiny of the application forms, it has been found that out of 4155 candidates, 354 (SAC-29, FC-76 & SATC-239) candidates have not submitted Hard Copies of their Application Forms/MPA Certificate/Eligibility from Competent Authority/Domicile/Resident Certificate. Accordingly, vide Notice dated 28.01.2026, 354 (SAC-29, FC-76 & SATC-239) candidates were advised to submit the requisite documents shown against each by or before 09.02.2026, failing which their candidature will be rejected and:

Whereas, despite giving ample opportunity for submission of requisite documents, the following 150 (SAC-24, FC-55 & SATC-71) candidates failed to submit the requisite documents:

Now, in view of the above, the candidature of below mentioned candidates is hereby rejected owing to the reason(s) as shown against each:

S. No.	Application No.	Name of the candidate S/Slmt	Percentage S/Slmt	Deficiency
SECRETARIAT ASSISTANT COURSE (SAC)				
1.	2024010100001	YASIN JAFRUL	80.00%	HARD COPY OF APPL FORM ALONG WITH MPA CERTIFICATE
2.	2024010100002	SHAMWANT LAL	75.00%	HARD COPY OF APPL FORM ALONG WITH MPA CERTIFICATE
3.	2024010100003	RAHIM AHMAD KHAN	75.00%	HARD COPY OF APPL FORM ALONG WITH MPA CERTIFICATE
4.	2024010100004	ABDUL ABBAS PERWAIZ	75.00%	HARD COPY OF APPL FORM ALONG WITH MPA CERTIFICATE
5.	2024010100005	MOHAMMAD SAADAT	75.00%	HARD COPY OF APPL FORM ALONG WITH MPA CERTIFICATE
6.	2024010100006	SHARIF AHMAD KHAN	75.00%	HARD COPY OF APPL FORM ALONG WITH MPA CERTIFICATE
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100.	2024010100100	SHARIF AHMAD KHAN	75.00%	HARD COPY OF APPL FORM ALONG WITH MPA CERTIFICATE

S. No.	Application No.	Name of the candidate S/Slmt	Percentage S/Slmt	Deficiency
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India Flags Trade, Energy Risks Amid West Asia Conflict

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- As the conflict in West Asia widened, India on Tuesday emphasised the interest of one crore Indian nationals in the region and voiced concern over consequences for the Indian economy due to possible disruptions in energy supplies, even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed the precarious situation with leaders of Oman, Kuwait and Qatar.

In its second statement since the US-Israel strikes on Iran and Tehran's subsequent retaliation, India once again called for "dialogue and diplomacy" to end the conflict, noting that New Delhi has critical stakes in the security and stability of West Asia and the current developments "evoke great anxiety".

New Delhi said it will continue to closely monitor the evolving situation and take relevant decisions in the national interest, adding that it is in touch with the governments in the region as well as other key partners.

"In recent days, we have not only witnessed an intensification of the conflict but also its spread to other nations. The destruction and deaths have mounted, even as normal life and economic activities come to a halt," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

"As a proximate neighbour with critical stakes in the security and stability of the region, these developments evoke great anxiety."



The ministry said almost one crore Indian citizens are living in West Asia and their safety and well-being are of "utmost priority" for New Delhi. "We cannot be impervious to any development that negatively affects them," it said.

The conflict in West Asia intensified with Iran continuing to pound several Gulf countries in retaliation for the joint attack against it by Israel and the US.

The US and Israel have also carried out fresh strikes on Iran. As part of its offensive, Iran has blocked the strategically located Strait of Hormuz shipping route, triggering a surge in global oil prices.

"Our trade and energy supply chains also traverse this geography. Any major disruption has serious consequences for the Indian economy," the ministry said.

The Strait of Hormuz handles nearly 20 per cent of the world's total oil and gas supplies. About 50 per cent of India's oil imports or roughly 2.6 million barrels a day pass through the Strait.

Iran has carried out a wave of attacks mainly targeting Israel and American military bases in several Gulf countries, including the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Qatar Declares Force Majeure, Gas Supplies To Indian Industry Cut



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Qatar, India's largest supplier of imported natural gas, has declared force majeure on deliveries following a halt in production in the wake of an Iranian drone strike -- a disruption that has led to a cut in supplies to Indian industry by up to 40 per cent, sources said.

Qatar supplies about 40 per cent of the nearly 27 million tonnes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) that India imports annually to meet demand across sectors ranging from power generation and fertiliser production to CNG distribution and piped cooking gas networks.

Gas importer Petronet LNG Ltd has informed gas marketers of Qatar halting its liquefied natural gas production after Iran continued to strike Gulf countries in retaliation for Israeli and US strikes against it, they said.

The attacks have also effectively brought oil and LNG shipments through the Strait of Hormuz to a near halt, driving up global energy prices as well as sharply raising war-risk insurance and shipping costs.

Iran controls the Strait -- a vital maritime chokepoint through which roughly 50 per cent of India's crude oil imports and around 54 per cent of its LNG supplies transit. It is the transit for not just LNG from Qatar but also from the UAE.

Sources said Petronet has informed its gas offtakers, GAIL (India) Ltd and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), about a halt in supplies from Qatar. The gas marketers have, in turn, cut supplies to industries while maintaining flow rates for CNG retailing.

The cuts range from 10 per cent to 40 per cent, they said.

Petronet has long term contract to buy 8.5 million tonnes per annum of LNG from Qatar. Additionally, it buys Qatari LNG from the spot market as well. Besides Petronet, companies such as IOC have LNG import contracts with the UAE.

Sources said GAIL and IOC are looking at tapping the spot or current market to meet the shortfall, but prices have firmed up. LNG in the spot market is now at USD 25 per million British thermal unit, roughly double the term contract rates.

India Has Enough Oil Stock To Weather West Asia Crisis: Govt

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- India holds sufficient crude and fuel inventories to meet domestic demand for petrol, diesel, and other fuels for six to eight weeks, top government sources said, cushioning the country against any short-term supply disruption amid escalating military conflict in West Asia.

About half of India's crude and LPG imports transit the Strait of Hormuz - the key energy chokepoint that has seen disruptions following US and Israeli attacks on Iranian government, military and nuclear facilities. Iran warned shipping away from the strait, and insurers withdrew coverage, effectively halting tanker movements.

A top oil ministry official, who wished not to be named, said the government is monitoring the situation "on a daily and hourly basis" and is confident of navigating through the crisis that by some estimates may last a week or ten days.

While the country has crude oil stocks to last 25 days and fuel to last a similar duration, contingency plans - including using stockpile in strategic petroleum reserves, commercial stocks, and diversified sourcing from the US, Russia, West Africa, and Latin America - will ensure continuity even if the crisis lasts longer.

While immediate shortages are unlikely, rising crude prices and higher freight and insurance costs could impact



India's import bill and inflation.

Separately, the ministry in a statement said Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri "briefed the media on the country's preparedness in the current circumstances" and it was informed that "the country is well stocked with crude oil and inventories of key petroleum products including petrol, diesel and ATF to deal with short-term disruptions arising from the Middle East."

It, however, did not give details of the stocks. "The Ministry has established a 24x7 control room to continuously monitor the supply and stock position of petroleum products across the country," it said.

"At present, the government is reasonably comfortable in terms of stocks. Safeguarding the interests of Indian consumers remains the highest priority. Based on continuous monitoring, the government is cautiously optimistic that phased measures can be

taken, if required, to further mitigate the situation."

India is the third largest importer, fourth largest refiner, and fifth largest exporter of petroleum products globally.

"It was further apprised that in the last few years, India has ensured both availability and affordability of energy for its population by diversifying its sources. Indian energy companies now have access to energy supplies that are not routed through the Strait of Hormuz.

"Such cargoes will remain available and help mitigate supplies that may be temporarily affected enroute through the Strait of Hormuz," the statement said.

The official said that while this year crude sourced from the countries that use the Strait of Hormuz is above 50 per cent due to a drop in Russian cargoes, the average over the past couple of years has been 40 per cent. The remaining 60 per cent is not shipped from the Strait.

37 Indian-Flagged Ships Stranded in Persian Gulf Amid Conflict

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- As many as 37 Indian-flagged ships with over 1,000 seafarers are stuck in the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the adjoining sea areas as the key shipping route through the Strait of Hormuz is closed due to the ongoing military actions involving the United States, Israel and Iran.

While some ships are carrying crude oil and LNG to Indian ports, others are on the way to bring petroleum products from the Gulf nations.

A total of 37 Indian-flagged ships with 1,109 sailors are stuck in the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the adjoining sea areas due to the closure of the key shipping route through the Strait of Hormuz, an official privy to the development told PTI.

The Directorate General of Shipping is in regular touch with the shipping companies and is closely monitoring the situation.

At least three Indian seafarers on board foreign-flagged vessels were killed, and one was injured in West Asia due to the current conflict.



A dedicated quick response team has been set up by the Shipping Ministry to enable timely coordination among authorities, ensure immediate response to emerging situations and facilitate prompt assistance to Indian seafarers and their families.

Shipping companies and Recruitment and Placement Service Licensees (RPSLs) have been advised to exercise caution in crew deployment and maintain regular communication with seafarers and their families. Helpline numbers have also been activated and shared with the families of the seafarers through RPSLs.

The Directorate General of Shipping also issued an advisory for maritime operators

to assess voyage-specific risks following the disruptions of the shipping route and closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran.

It is closely monitoring the evolving maritime security situation in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Oman and the adjoining sea areas, and the threats of the recent geopolitical developments, including missile and drone activity, electronic interference, and other maritime security concerns.

On Tuesday, Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal chaired a review meeting to assess the prevailing security environment in the Persian Gulf region and examine its implications for Indian maritime assets and personnel.

PM Modi Urges Industry to Boost Investment, Focus on R&D

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday urged industry leaders to step up investments, embrace emerging technologies and prioritise research to leverage the vast opportunities offered by free trade agreements with various nations.

Addressing the second webinar on Budget 2026-27, the prime minister said, the world is now looking for reliable and resilient manufacturing partners, and India has the opportunity to play this role decisively and enhance the country's participation in the global supply chain.

For this, he said, "all stakeholders must invest with confidence, adopt new technologies, and significantly increase investment in research -- those days of being frugal in research are over. We must ensure quality in line with global standards. As I often say, when opportunities arise to move ahead, we must have only one mantra -- Quality, Quality, Quality."

Stressing that India has entered into free trade agreements with numerous countries, he said, these agreements have opened up a wide range of opportunities for the country.

"In such a situation, he said, "our responsibility is that we should never compromise on quality. If there is one area where we must apply maximum strength, intelligence, and focus, it is quality. Our



products must meet global standards," he said.

For this, he said, "We need to study the needs and expectations of other countries and conduct thorough research. We must understand the preferences and comfort of consumers in those markets. In today's competitive world, quality is what gives us a golden opportunity. We must create user-friendly products tailored to their needs."

Only then can India truly benefit from the opportunities opened by various free trade agreements, which have created a highway of growth for you, he said.

Today, the world is seeking reliable and resilient manufacturing partners, he said, adding that India has a strong opportunity to fulfil this role.

"Our direction is clear. Our resolve is clear. Build more, produce more, connect more, and now the need is to export more," he said.

No direction automatically turns into results, he said, adding that real change happens on the ground when industry, financial institutions, and state governments work together to translate vision into reality.



Dy CM Calls For Skilling J&K Youth For Local, National, Int'l Job Markets

Observer News Service

JAMMU- Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary Tuesday called for a comprehensive study and exploration of emerging job opportunities at the local, national and international level to enhance employment prospects for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

He made these remarks while chairing a high-level review meeting of the Skill Development Department (SDD) held at PWD Guest House, Jammu.

The meeting was attended by Secretary, SDD, Rajiv Ranjan; Director, SDD, Owais Ahmad; MD, Skill Development Mission, Leena Padha; Principals, Superintendents of Polytechnics and ITIs, besides other senior officers while officers from the Kashmir region participated virtually.

Taking a comprehensive review of the department's functioning, the Deputy Chief Minister directed the officers to conduct area-wise assessments of job markets and undertake detailed studies of employment trends at the national and international levels. He emphasized introducing latest, innovative and job-oriented trades across ITIs and Polytechnics to

meet the local industry needs and tap employment avenues in European and Middle Eastern markets. He also called for roping in reputed job consultancies and strengthening placement cells to facilitate employment-driven training programmes.

The Deputy Chief Minister asked all the Principals to proactively share ideas for launching demand-based courses aligned with the industry requirements to effectively address unemployment.

Stressing the need to bring greater vibrancy and accountability in the department, he said that performance would determine postings and career progression, not recommendations. "You are nation builders. Work with dedication and ensure our youth are skilled and employable," he asserted.

While reviewing the functioning of Polytechnics and ITIs, he directed for seamless operations and saturation of enrolment across all trades. He emphasized inclusive skilling, instructing the officers to "ensure that underprivileged, destitute and orphaned youth are identified and enrolled in various courses and trades being offered by skill institutions."

How To Get A Personal Loan With Low Interest In 2026

Observer News Service

PERSONAL LOAN

Getting a personal loan at a low interest rate in 2026 really comes down to how well you prepare. Since personal loans don't require collateral, lenders look closely at your credit, your job, and whether you can pay them back. If you want them to offer you a better rate, you have to show you're not a big risk. Let's break down what actually affects your interest rate—and how you can tip the odds in your favor.

What Changes Your Personal Loan Interest Rate

Not everyone gets the same rate. Lenders look at a few main things:

1. CREDIT SCORE AND HISTORY

Your credit score is important. The higher your score, the lower the risk for the lender—and that usually means a lower rate for you. If your score's low or you've missed

payments in the past, expect to pay more. Before you do anything, check your credit report for errors and fix them if you find any.

2. INCOME AND JOB STABILITY

Lenders want to see a steady paycheck. They'll check your monthly income, how long you've had your job, who you work for, and what other debts you're juggling. If your income is solid and your job history is stable, you look like a safer bet, and that helps your rate.

3. LOAN TENURE

How long you want to take to repay the loan changes things. Shorter loans mean higher monthly payments, but you pay less interest overall. Stretch it out, and you'll pay less each month, but more in total interest. You need to find a balance between what you can afford each month and how much the loan will cost you in the end.



4. EXISTING DEBT

If you're already carrying a lot of debt, lenders get nervous. A high debt-to-income ratio can bump up your interest rate or limit how much you can borrow. Paying down what you already owe makes you look better on paper.

HOW TO LAND A LOWER INTEREST RATE

You can't control the market, but you can make your application stand out.

BOOST YOUR CREDIT SCORE

Pay every bill—loans, cards,

everything—on time. Don't apply for a bunch of new credit cards or loans at once. Keep your credit card balances low. A good score is a great help when you negotiate.

SHOP AROUND

Look for all the important numbers such as interest rates, fees, guidelines for paying off debts early, and penalties for late payments.

BORROW WHAT YOU ACTUALLY NEED

The less you borrow, the lower the risk for the lender. That often means a better deal for you.

CHECK YOUR EMI

Use an EMI calculator before you apply. Make sure the monthly payment fits your budget without putting you under pressure.

What's New in 2026

In 2026, lenders use more technology tools and real-time data to set your rate. Automated systems keep an eye

on how you pay your bills and how well you manage your money, so it's more important than ever to have a clean digital record.

You have a far better chance of getting a decent rate if you keep your money in order, have a regular income, and don't borrow too much.

WRAPPING UP

Getting a personal loan at a low interest rate in 2026 mostly comes down to showing you're financially responsible.

Your credit, your income, how long you want the loan, and how much debt you already have all play a part.

If you clean up your credit, compare your options, and borrow smart, you'll keep your costs down. In the end, a little prep work before you apply goes a long way.

(Disclaimer: The above press release comes to you under an arrangement and Kashmir Observer takes no editorial responsibility for the same.)

AAI Seeks Fuel Stock Details From International Airports

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI/ MUMBAI- State-owned Airports Authority of India (AAI) has asked all international airport operators in the country to provide details about available fuel stocks as well as estimated requirements for the next seven days amid the escalating Middle East crisis, sources said on Tuesday.

The communication comes against the backdrop of the escalating conflict in the Middle East involving the US, Israel and Iran that threatens to impact global oil supplies.

One of the sources said the details have been sought as a "precautionary measure" to have a clear understanding about the fuel supply situation at the international airports.

The sources told PTI that following directions from the civil aviation ministry, AAI has sought details about the current fuel supply status from all the international airport operators.

The operators have also been asked to provide details about average daily fuel consumption, estimated fuel requirement for the next seven days and date of next scheduled fuel replenishment, the sources said.

India has 33 international airports, including at Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai.

In terms of international flight operations, there were 355 departures and 344 arrivals at the airports in the country on March 2, as per the data available with the ministry.

According to reports, many ships have come under attack in the Strait of Hormuz, a key conduit for global energy flows.

Around one-third of the world's seaborne crude oil exports and about 20 per cent of liquefied natural gas shipments transit through the Strait of Hormuz. It is located between Oman and Iran and connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

Srinagar MP Ruhullah Faces FIRs For Social Media Posts

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Srinagar Police on Tuesday registered cases against Lok Sabha MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi and former Srinagar mayor Junaid Azim Mattu for allegedly circulating "false, fabricated and misleading content" in the wake of escalating tensions following the killing of Ali Khamenei in a US-Israel strike on Iran.

In a statement posted on X, Srinagar Police said it acted on "credible inputs" regarding the circulation of content aimed at creating fear, disturbing public order and inciting unlawful activities.

"The content in question, prima facie, reflects dissemination of distorted narratives and unverified information capable of causing public unrest and societal disharmony. Such deliberate attempts to spread misinformation pose a serious threat to peace, security and overall stability," the police said.

According to the statement, FIR No. 02/2026 and FIR No. 03/2026 have been registered under Sections 197(1)(d) and 353(1)(b) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at Cyber Police Station, Srinagar. Investigation into both cases has been initiated.

The police reiterated their commitment to maintaining law and order and advised citizens to verify information through

official and credible sources before sharing content online. "Further legal action shall follow as warranted under law," the statement said.

Both leaders had earlier alleged that their security cover had been downgraded or withdrawn following their statements on Iran and the killing of Ali Khamenei in a US-Israel strike and described the action as an attempt to silence them.

Ruhullah, who represents Srinagar in Parliament and is regarded as an influential Shia leader, said his security detail had been reduced but asserted that such steps would not deter him from speaking out.

He said he was neither fascinated by "petty things" nor intimidated by the absence of security personnel. As a citizen, he added, he would continue to exercise his constitutional rights.

"I will stand up against atrocities, violation of laws, freedom and democracy given to us by the Constitution, to the last drop of my blood," Mehdi said, adding that his father was martyred while standing for his people.

Former Srinagar mayor Mattu also alleged that his security had been effectively withdrawn following his statements on Iran and the killing of Khamenei.

"For my statements on Iran and Ayatullah Syed Ali Khamenei's martyrdom and for speaking against the BJP led

government's moral abdication and deafening silence on the issue of the illegitimate barbaric onslaught on Iran by the US and Israel, my security has just been effectively withdrawn with immediate effect," Mattu posted on X.

He termed the action a measure aimed at silencing him and said he would continue to speak on what he described as issues of humanity and justice.

"It turns out that as a mainstream Kashmiri politician, you have to be shamefully neutral and silent in the face of Israel massacring young schoolgirls and assassinating a head of state or face consequences in 'New India,'" he said, adding that he would not adopt such a stance.

Police officials have not issued a detailed public statement specifying the content considered misleading. However, sources said the cases were registered to prevent the spread of material that could potentially disturb public order amid protests reported in parts of the Valley.

The developments come amid heightened tensions in Jammu and Kashmir following protests in several areas against the assassination of Ayatollah Khamenei, with authorities urging restraint and warning against the circulation of unverified content online.

SC Fastens Liability Of Paying Penalty On Employer For Delay In Depositing Compensation

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has fastened the liability to pay penalty on an employer for a delay in depositing the compensation amount under the Employees' Compensation Act, 1923, saying the law is a "social welfare statute" for redressing employees' grievances.

A bench of Justices Arvind Kumar and P B Varale said in a catena of judgments, the apex court has stressed the "liberal and purposive interpretation" of the Act in favour of the employees being a social-welfare legislation.

The bench delivered its verdict on an appeal filed by an insurance firm, challenging a May 2025 order of the Delhi High Court.

The high court had fastened the liability of paying the penalty imposed under section 4A(3)(b) of the Act on the insurance firm.

"The perusal of the statement of objects of the said legislation makes it crystal clear that the said legislation is a social welfare statute brought in by Parliament to redress the grievances of the employees in case of accidents that may occur in or during the course of



employment by payment of adequate compensation expeditiously..." the top court said in its February 23 verdict.

It noted that the employee, who was employed as a commercial driver, had died in February 2017 while driving the vehicle.

His legal heirs had preferred a claim petition, seeking compensation under the 1923 Act before the commissioner of the Delhi government's labour department.

In November 2020, the commissioner held that there existed an "employer-employee" relationship and since the death had occurred during and in the course of employment, the employer was liable to pay compensation to the claimants.

The commissioner had fixed the compensation amount at Rs 7,36,680, along with interest.

Noting that there existed a valid insurance policy of the

vehicle and the incident had occurred during the policy period, the commissioner granted the employer to indemnify the compensation, which he was held liable to pay by claiming it from the insurance firm.

The top court noted that the commissioner had also issued a show-cause notice as to why a penalty, not exceeding 50 per cent of the compensation amount, should not be imposed on the employer for the default in paying the compensation within a month.

As the employer neither appeared before the commissioner nor filed a reply to the show-cause notice, the latter in February 2021 imposed a 35-percent penalty on the employer for delaying the deposit of the compensation amount within a reasonable time without any justification.

Later, the matter went to the high court, which passed the order in May last year.

The insurance firm then moved the top court, aggrieved by the limited aspect of imposition of liability for payment of penalty under the Act.

The apex court noted that the insurance company has undeniably admitted its liability to pay compensation and

the interest component under section 4A(3)(b) of the Act, amounting to Rs 7,36,680 plus interest from the date of death till payment.

It said the present form of section 4A(3)(b) was the result of a substitution brought into the principal section by way of the Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Act, 1995, which came into force on September 15, 1995.

"Thus, when the statute itself has obligated the employer to make the payment within one month, such obligation cannot be countenanced as subservient to any contractual obligation or bypassing the statutory obligation, as the same would tantamount to disregard of the legislative intent envisaged under the said provision," the bench said.

Allowing the appeal, it set aside the high court's order so far as it imposed the liability of paying the penalty on the insurance company.

The top court said "liability is fastened upon the employer i.e., respondent no. 4 herein, to pay the amount of penalty of Rs 2,57,838 as ordered by the commissioner by order dated February 8, 2021, within a period of eight weeks from today".

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Peace And Stability

"Preserving peace and sustaining the progress of society is a shared responsibility that rests equally upon each one of us," he said in a post on X.

Officials said the meeting involved detailed deliberations on the prevailing security scenario in the Union Territory, with emphasis on coordinated action between police and civil administration to safeguard stability.

"The lieutenant governor held in-depth deliberations on the prevailing security scenario in the UT of Jammu Kashmir," an official spokesman said.

The meeting was held in the wake of widespread protests in Kashmir and parts of the Jammu region against the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in the joint strike by the US and Israel.

The meeting was attended by GoC-in-C Northern Command Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma, DGP Nalin Prabhat, GoC 15 Corps Lieutenant General Prashant Srivastava and MGCS Northern Command Major General Balbir Singh at the Lok Bhavan here.

Northern Army

remains resolute in its commitment to ensure safety & security of citizens of #JammuKashmir," the Army said.

Protests have rocked many parts of the valley after the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

War Spreads Across

majority in Iran.

The spiralling nature of the war raised questions about when and how it would end. Trump said it could last four to five weeks - but that the US was prepared to go longer. He seemed to leave open the possibility for more extensive US military involvement, telling the New York Post on Monday that he was not ruling out the possibility of boots on the ground.

Still, the administration's objectives remain unclear. The initial US-Israeli strikes reportedly killed Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei, and former President Donald Trump urged Iranians to rise up against their government. Instead, reports indicate a surge of national unity, intensified by a heavy civilian toll, including the deaths of 168 schoolchildren on day one of war in southern Iran.

Senior administration officials are now saying regime change was not the goal. Trump's initial announcement of the strikes listed several grievances, from concerns about Iran's nuclear and missile programmes to its leadership. Washington pulls out staff

An attack from two drones on the US Embassy in Riyadh caused a "limited fire", according to Saudi Arabia's Defence Ministry, and the embassy urged Americans to avoid the compound. It followed an attack on the US Embassy in Kuwait, which announced Tuesday it had been closed until further notice.

Black smoke was seen rising over Riyadh's Diplomatic Quarter, which houses foreign missions, after the attack, the Reuters news agency reported.

Foreign ministry in Kuwait released a statement on Tuesday saying that a "treacherous Iranian attack" targeted the US embassy building in Kuwait. This came a day after videos emerged that showed smoke emerging from near the embassy in Kuwait City.

The US State Department ordered the evacuation of non-emergency personnel and family in Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Qatar, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. In addition, the US has urged citizens to leave more than a dozen Middle Eastern countries, as have many other countries, though with much of the airspace closed, many remained stranded.

The US-Israeli strikes have killed at least 787 people, including 168 schoolchildren,

according to the Iranian Red Crescent Society. In Israel, where Iranian missiles struck several locations, 11 people were killed. Lebanon's Hezbollah has also struck Israel, whose retaliatory strikes killed 52 people in Lebanon.

The US military has confirmed the deaths of six American soldiers. Three people were killed in the UAE, and one each in Kuwait and Bahrain.

Israel and the US target nuclear facilities in Iran

Across Iran's capital, explosions rang out throughout the night into Tuesday, with aircraft heard overhead. Strikes hit Gandhi Hospital in Tehran and the heritage palace of Gulistan. Iranian state TV too was attacked, but the broadcasts remained unaffected.

The United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, said Iran's Natanz nuclear enrichment site had sustained "some recent damage", though there was "no radiological consequence expected".

The US hit Natanz during the 12-day war in June, when Israeli and American strikes greatly weakened Iran's nuclear programme.

It's not clear how long the war will last

The expansion of Iranian retaliation across the Gulf; the intensity of the Israeli and American attacks; the assassination of Iran's top leader; and the lack of any apparent exit plan suggested the conflict could be prolonged.

US military assets hit

Bahrain said that a missile attack targeted the headquarters of the US Navy's 5th Fleet, located in the capital, Manama.

Kuwait's Defence Ministry said that Ali al-Salem airbase came under attack by a number of ballistic missiles, all of which were intercepted by Kuwaiti air defence systems.

In Qatar, the Defence Ministry said it "thwarted" attacks on the country in accordance with a "pre-approved security plan", intercepting "all missiles" before they reached the country's territory. On Saturday, Iran had targeted the Al Udeid airbase, which hosts the US forces, the government said.

Over the past four days of the conflict, attacks on Gulf countries have intensified, and governments in the region say they have intercepted large numbers of Iranian missiles and drones.

Bahrain said its air defence systems have destroyed 73 missiles and 91 drones launched by Iran since the start of the latest conflict.

Qatar's state-run energy firm and the world's largest producer of liquefied natural gas (LNG), QatarEnergy, announced on Monday that it had halted LNG production following Iranian attacks on its operational facilities in Ras Laffan and Mesaieed in Qatar.

Iranian officials have publicly denied targeting energy facilities of Gulf countries.

Iran accused Israel of carrying out a drone attack on facilities belonging to Saudi oil giant Saudi Aramco, describing it as a "false flag" operation.

Iran's Tasnim News Agency quoted a military source as saying, "The attack on Aramco was an Israeli false flag operation, adding that Israel's goal is to distract the minds of regional countries from its crimes in attacking civilian sites in Iran."

"Iran has announced frankly that it will target all American and Israeli interests, installations, and facilities in the region and has attacked many of them so far, but Aramco facilities have not been among the targets of Iranian attacks so far," the source told the agency.

Tasnim quoted the source as saying: "According to data provided to us by intelligence sources, the port of Fujairah in the UAE is also one of the next targets of the Israelis in the false flag operation, and this regime intends to attack it."

Israel sends troops into Lebanon
The conflict has spread to Lebanon, where Hezbollah fired missiles at Israel on Monday,

prompting Israel to retaliate.

On Tuesday, the Israeli military said it had moved additional troops into southern Lebanon and taken new positions on several strategic points close to the border.

Israel also hit Beirut with more airstrikes, saying it was targeting "Hezbollah command centres and weapons storage facilities." Explosions could be heard and smoke seen in a southern suburb of Beirut.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said the Lebanese army was evacuating some of its border positions. A senior Hezbollah official, Mohamoud Komati, said the group now had no option but to fight Israel.

India Relocates

Tehran stepped up retaliatory strikes. "Due to the heightened risk perception in Tehran city, the Embassy of India has relocated most Indian students who were in Tehran," the mission said in a statement.

The students have been shifted to locations outside Tehran, with the embassy arranging transportation, food and accommodation.

"Only a small number of students who declined the embassy's offer remain in Tehran," it said.

For other Indian nationals and students still in Iran, the advisory remains unchanged. The mission urged them to stay indoors as far as possible, avoid windows, refrain from visiting protest sites and remain in regular contact with the embassy.

Nearly 9,000 Indians, including students, are believed to be in Iran, though the exact number of students is not immediately known.

The conflict intensified after Iran carried out fresh strikes targeting Israel and American military bases in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, following joint US-Israeli attacks on Iran on Saturday.

As part of its response, Iran has also blocked the Strait of Hormuz, a key global shipping route, triggering a surge in international oil prices.

The US military said six of its personnel have been killed so far. The Iranian Red Crescent Society reported at least 787 deaths from the US-Israeli strikes, while reports from Israel said 11 people were killed there. (PTI)

Mobile Curbs In

SMS, remain suspended.

The restrictions came into effect at 9 am on March 1 and are scheduled to continue till 8 pm on March 4.

Official sources said the situation is under close watch and the decision on further extension of reduced speeds and related curbs will depend on the prevailing law and order assessment.

Educational Institutions

situation closely and will take the call of re-opening of educational institutions after only after assessing the ground situation.

Following the killing of Supreme leader of Iran Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in joint US-Israeli strikes, a widespread protest erupted across Jammu and Kashmir.

Pertinently, schools upto 8th standard were all set to reopen on Monday following the winter break of more than two months.

Earlier on February-23, schools from 9th to 12th standard classes resumed academic activities in Kashmir division and winter zones of Jammu division following a winter break of over 70 days.

The government had ordered the students of 9th class and onwards to observe the winter vacations from December-11-2025 to February-22-2026.

On November-25, School Education Department (SED) had announced winter break in a phased manner for Kashmir division

and winter zones of Jammu division.

SED in an order had said that the vacations for Pre-primary (Balvatika) classes shall commence from November-26 to February-28-2026.

In case of middle classes upto 8th standard, the department had said that the vacations shall be observed from December-01 to February-28.

It also said that the winter break for 9th to 12th standard shall commence from December-11 to February-22.

SED had ordered the teaching faculty to remain available for any academic activity during the vacation period.

The Teaching staff was ordered to report back to their respective schools on February-20-2026 for making arrangements regarding opening of schools.

Earlier on February-16, Colleges in Kashmir valley resumed activities following a 52 days of winter vacations.

J&K Higher Education Department on December-23-2025 had announced 52-days winter vacation for degree colleges falling in the winter zones of Kashmir division.

The government had said that the degree colleges in the Kashmir Division and those in the winter zone of Jammu Division shall observe winter vacations from December-24-2025 to February-14-2026.

Which Law Gave

Expressing condolences to the people of Iran, he described the killing of the Supreme Leader and members of his family as deeply tragic and unacceptable.

At the same time, the Chief Minister said Iran's retaliatory strikes on countries such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia were also wrong.

"Israel and America attacking Iran was wrong. But Iran's reaction, targeting places like the UAE, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, was also wrong. Instead of stopping, the war is spreading further," he said, adding, "War is not the cure for any problem."

Appeals for Calm in Valley

Amid protests reported from parts of the Valley following the killing of Ali Khamenei, Omar appealed to residents to maintain peace.

"I appeal to the people of J&K not to let the situation deteriorate. Some elements are trying to exploit the situation and disturb the atmosphere, and reports of such incidents have already begun to emerge from certain places," he said.

He said incidents of stone pelting had been reported and that at one location an attempt was made to assault a deputy superintendent of police.

"Because of such incidents, the government is compelled to take stricter measures," he said. Omar also cautioned against excessive use of force.

"I do not want any misuse of force by the police or the central paramilitary forces here, resulting in people being injured or, God forbid, anyone losing their life. That would be deeply unfortunate," he said.

On the safety of Indian nationals in Iran, the Chief Minister said the J&K government was in close coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs.

"Most of our students and other people who are in Iran have been moved to safe areas. Some of our final year students who are in hospitals are not agreeing to leave," he said.

Reiterating his appeal for de-escalation, Omar said the ongoing conflict risks widening instability across the region.

"War is not the cure for any problem," he said.

NIA Court Seeks

suspected to be connected to the conspiracy and execution of the attack. Among them is a GoPro Hero 12 Black camera, bearing serial

number C3501325471706, which investigators believe is crucial in establishing pre-attack reconnaissance, movement and operational preparation of the terrorist module.

A lawful notice under the BNSS was issued to the manufacturer, GoPro B V, seeking details about the device's supply chain and activation. In its response, the company stated that the camera had been supplied to AE Group International Limited, a distributor based in the People's Republic of China, and was activated on January 30, 2024, in Dongguan, China.

The manufacturer informed the agency that it does not possess downstream transaction details or end-user records. According to the NIA's application, the activation, initial use and commercial trail of the device fall within the jurisdiction of China, and the relevant purchaser and technical records can only be obtained through judicial assistance from Chinese authorities.

The court noted that India and China do not have a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty on the subject. However, since both countries have ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, assistance can be sought under its framework.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has granted concurrence for issuing the Letter Rogatory, the court recorded.

The judge observed that the information sought is vital to establish the chain of custody, user attribution and evidentiary linkage of the seized device. Holding that all legal requirements had been complied with, the court allowed the application and directed issuance of the Letter Rogatory to the competent judicial authority in China to trace the purchaser, end user and associated technical records.

Procedural directions were also issued for translating the documents into Chinese and forwarding them through appropriate diplomatic channels. The application has been disposed of and tagged with the main case file, with a copy of the order sent to the NIA for compliance.

Safety Of 1 Cr

since the US and Israel attacked Iran and Tehran's subsequent retaliation, India said the safety and security of Indians living in West Asia is its "utmost priority".

"In recent days, we have not only witnessed an intensification of the conflict but also its spread to other nations. The destruction and deaths have mounted, even as normal life and economic activities come to a halt," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

"As a proximate neighbour with critical stakes in the security and stability of the region, these developments evoke great anxiety," it said.

The MEA, however, did not mention the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in the US-Israel strike.

"There are almost one crore Indian citizens who live and work in the Gulf region. Their safety and well-being is of utmost priority. We cannot be impervious to any development that negatively affects them," it said.

"Our trade and energy supply chains also traverse this geography. Any major disruption has serious consequences for the Indian economy."

"As a country whose nationals are prominent in the global workforce, India is also firmly opposed to attacks on merchant shipping," it said.

The MEA said that already, some Indian nationals have lost their lives or are missing as a result of the attacks in the last few days.

"In this background, India strongly reiterates its call for dialogue and diplomacy. We raise our voice clearly in favour of an early end to the conflict. Already, many lives have been regrettably lost and we express our grief in that regard," the MEA said.

Real Madrid Suffer Back-To-Back Defeats, Lose Ground In Title Race

AP

LONDON: Real Madrid fell to a damaging 1-0 defeat by Getafe at home in La Liga on Monday, leaving them four points behind leaders Barcelona. Alvaro Arbeloa's side, beaten by a superb volley from Martin Satriano, suffered a second consecutive loss in the Spanish top flight for the first time since 2020. Madrid forward Franco Mastantuono was sent off in stoppage time for apparent dissent to make a bad night worse for Los Blancos. "Obviously it's a match where we could have done things better, but I think my players tried and we had more clear chances than them," Arbeloa told reporters.

"However in football deserving isn't enough, and Ge-

tafe played a great game."

With French superstar Kylian Mbappe in France to treat a knee sprain, Madrid lined up with Gonzalo Garcia in attack alongside Brazil star Vinicius Junior at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Real Madrid were beaten at Osasuna last weekend, allowing rivals Barca to overtake them in the title race, and Hansi Flick's side stretched their lead by thrashing Villarreal on Saturday.

Vinicius, in excellent form in 2026 after an inconsistent start to the season, spurned a fine early chance.

The winger burst through on goal but David Soria saved well with his leg.

A brilliant roulette from Arda Guler nearly earned Madrid the breakthrough but Soria tipped over the Turkish



forward's strike.

Getafe were upset by a pain-

ful collision between Madrid

defender Antonio Rudiger and

Diego Rico, in which the Ger-

man's knee knocked the Span-

iard's head.

Uruguayan forward Satriano broke the deadlock with a delicious strike from the edge of the box after compatriot Mauro Arambarri nodded the ball into his path.

Soria, who had a fine game, saved from Vinicius in the second half and the Brazilian called for more support from Madrid's fans.

However the team were not giving them much to get excited about, although Rudiger came close to levelling with a header.

- 'Nobody throwing in towel' -

It was a disjointed display from a Madrid side who visit Celta Vigo on Friday in La Liga, before hosting Pep Guardiola's Manchester City in the Champions League last 16, unsure if top scorer Mbappe will be fit to play.

In stoppage time Mastantuono was dismissed, seemingly for something he said to the referee, before Getafe were also reduced to 10 men when Adrian Liso kicked the ball away and was shown a second yellow card.

"Nobody here is throwing in the towel, this is Real Madrid, you don't give up until the last game," added Arbeloa.

"Four points is a distance that we can cut back and we will fight for that."

Jose Bordalas's Getafe rose to 11th and were able to celebrate their first win at the Bernabeu since 2008.

"It's very hard to get points when you come here, I have to congratulate the team for the work in defence, then we got our goal and we could even have scored another in the end," said Getafe defender Kiko Femenia.

War Strands West Indies Cricket Team in India

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The West Indies cricket team's departure from India after its exit from the T20 World Cup has been delayed owing to international airspace restrictions triggered by the US and Israeli strikes on Iran.

Cricket West Indies said it is working closely with the ICC and relevant government authorities for ensure safe travel of the players. Flight operations in the Gulf region are currently suspended with damage also reported at the Dubai International Airport, which is one the busiest in the world.

"Cricket West Indies (CWI) wishes to advise that the departure of the West Indies Senior Men's Team from India, following their exit from the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, has been delayed due to international airspace restrictions," the board said in a statement. "These restrictions are a direct result of the security threats posed by military action in the Gulf Region, which has impacted several international flight routes and required airlines to adjust scheduled services for safety reasons."

The team lost to India in a must-win Super Eight match in Kolkata to bow out of the tournament.

"CWI appreciates the un-



derstanding and concern of our fans, families, and stakeholders during this time," the statement added.

A BCCI official told PTI on condition of anonymity, "West Indies are still here. There's no confirmation when they will leave. Obviously things are being looked after by the ICC. I don't think West Indies boys are under any kind of pressure to go back home."

Besides West Indies, Zimbabwe is also stranded in India due to the same reason.

Zimbabwe Cricket confirmed on Monday that the squad remains in Delhi, adding that while fresh travel arrangements are being worked out.

"The squad was scheduled to return home via Dubai, but travel plans have been affected by the evolving situation in the Middle East, which has disrupted key transit routes," Zimbabwe Cricket said in a statement on 'X'.

"ZC remains in constant

communication with the ICC and team management on the ground to ensure the squad's safe and timely return."

Zimbabwe lost by five wickets to South Africa in their final Super Eights match here on Sunday.

The ICC has activated contingency measures and is working with international carriers to secure alternative travel arrangements.

In a press release, the ICC said it is closely monitoring the situation and working with relevant authorities and airline partners to facilitate safe and timely travel for all participating teams and support staff. "The safety and well-being of players, officials and their families remains our top priority. We are actively coordinating with airlines and local authorities to make alternative travel arrangements in light of the current airspace restrictions," the ICC stated.

India-England Semis Humdinger; Bumrah, Tilak Key: Gavaskar

Press Trust of India

BENGALURU: The legendary Sunil Gavaskar expects the T20 World Cup semifinal between India and England to be a "humdinger" with the hosts holding a slight edge because of their flexible batting unit and the presence of a hard-to-read pace ace in Jasprit Bumrah.

Reigning champions India will take on England at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Thursday in a repeat of the semifinal matches in the 2022 and 2024 editions.

In 2022, England subjugated India by 10 wickets at Adelaide while Rohit Sharma's team tamed the Three Lions two years later at the Providence, West Indies.

"Both sides are very well-matched. They have got batting and bowling. They have got middle-order and, you know, the finisher. Both teams have variety in their bowling," Gavaskar told select media ahead of DP World Celebrity Golf Event to create awareness about the CHAMPS Foundation.

"England have got a few players who have played in the IPL, who are familiar with Indian conditions, familiar with the pressure of playing a knockout. So, I think it is going to be a humdinger," he added. However, Gavaskar said the tussle between pace talisman Bumrah and England batters like the in-form Harry Brook will have a significant role in shaping the outcome of the match. He advocated for Bumrah's early introduction in the powerplay.

"I do believe that he (Bumrah) should be bowling at least two



overs in the powerplay because as a new-ball bowler, if he can get those early wickets... Jos Buttler, Phil Salt and Harry Brook, he will have pretty much broken the back of the England batting," the former captain explained.

"So, him coming in to bowl the fifth over, when four overs have already been bowled and the batters have got about 20 deliveries, means that both batters have got about 8-10 deliveries to settle in. So, wouldn't it be better then for Bumrah and for India if Bumrah were to bowl to them first and get them out?" he wondered.

So, what makes Bumrah such a devastating bowler across formats? Gavaskar cited his ability to be an enigma as a major factor.

"If you have read Andre Agassi's autobiography (Open), how did he pick up where Boris Becker was going to serve? He wasn't able to pick his serve the first few times and then he realised that if he had

his tongue on the left as he tossed the ball up, then he would be serving wide. If he had his tongue on the right, then he would be serving on the centre line.

"But in Bumrah's case, he doesn't give you anything away. Therefore, it's very, very difficult to read him. And because he sort of goes wide and then delivers the ball, you often tend to think it's going to basically come in. But he can get the ball to move away. So that's why he's been such a devastating bowler in all three forms," he noted.

Another advantage India have, as per Gavaskar, is a highly flexible batting unit, and he gave the example of Tilak Varma batting at various positions in this ICC showpiece.

Tilak batted at No. 3 initially, but moved down to No. 5 and 6 once the team management decided to draft in Sanju Samson into the eleven.

However, the left-hander made telling contributions in the Super Eight matches against Zimbabwe and the West Indies, guiding India to the semifinals.

"I have always thought of Tilak Varma as a very smart cricketer, somebody who assesses the situation well and then plays accordingly. I think down the order at No.5 or 6, he really can see what is the need of the hour. I think the way he batted (vs Windies), he really took the pressure off Samson.

"If he (Tilak) was struggling, then Samson would have had to take a few risks. In recent times, we have been told that batting order can be flexible. And I think India is fortunate to have players like Tilak who can bat at 3 or even bat at 5 or 6," he added.

Veteran batter Jos Buttler might be struggling a bit in this tournament, but Gavaskar reminded India of the dangers of taking the Englishman lightly.

PCB to Impose Penalties on Pak Players for T20 Debacle



Press Trust of India

KARACHI, MAR 2 (PTI) Livid with the Pakistan team's early elimination from the T20 World Cup, the country's cricket board has decided to impose financial penalties on the players for their below-par show, with some sources saying that the amount could be as high as PKR 5 million (approximately USD 18000) per member.

The action follows a string of poor results in major tournaments.

A reliable source said that appropriate action is being considered by the Pakistan

Cricket Board (PCB) in the wake of the team's exit from the Super Eight stage of the event co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

"No final decision has been taken on this as yet. But yes it is under consideration to financially penalise the players," he confirmed to PTI without revealing the details.

He said it is being debated whether it would be the right step to hit the players financially.

However, other sources in the PCB claimed that the board will impose a fine of PKR 5 million each on the players who returned home on Sunday night following

their dismal outing.

Pakistan failed to qualify for the semifinals and lost to big teams like arch-foes India and England while their Super Eight game against New Zealand was washed out. They beat Sri Lanka in their final Super Eight game but couldn't qualify for the semi-finals.

The performance of the players, according to the source, has not only upset the PCB but also influential figures in the government.

"The feeling is enough is enough and these players despite so much backing let down the nation in big events," the source added.

Iran's World Cup Place in US Put in Doubt by War

AP

GENEVA: Iran's place at the men's World Cup in three months was put in doubt amid an escalating Middle East conflict sparked by the soccer tournament's co-host the United States.

Iran is due to play its three group stage games in the U.S. — two in Inglewood, California, then in Seattle — from June 15-26. Cities in Canada and Mexico also will host some of the 104 games.

The U.S. and Israel have targeted Iran in coordinated attacks since Saturday that killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and dozens more senior officials.

It provoked an Iranian response that aimed missiles at U.S. allies including 2022 World Cup host Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which FIFA has picked to stage the 2034 edition.

"What is certain is that after this attack, we cannot be expected to look forward to the World Cup with hope," said Iran's top soccer official Mehdi Taj, a vice president of the Asian Football Confederation.

It is unclear if the state-backed Iranian soccer federation could refuse to send its team to the 48-nation tournament that starts June 11, or the U.S. government could effectively block the team.

FIFA has declined comment since Saturday, when secretary general Mattias Grafstrom said it would "monitor developments around all issues around the world."

The White House's top official overseeing World Cup preparations, Andrew Guilianni, seemed



unconcerned Saturday in a social media post.

"We'll deal with soccer games tomorrow," Guilianni wrote about Iran, "tonight, we celebrate their opportunity for freedom."

Here is a look at the issues in play:

Asian soccer power Iran has one of the best national teams in Asia and has qualified for six of the past eight World Cups.

It is No. 20 in the FIFA world rankings of 211 teams, and has not been lower than No. 24 since the last World Cup in Qatar.

Iran was among the second-seeded teams in the World Cup draw held in Washington, D.C. in December, minutes after U.S. President Donald Trump was presented with the inaugural FIFA Peace Prize.

Though Taj and other Iranian soccer officials were denied visas to enter the U.S., the draw outcome was favorable for Iran, es-

pecially in the expanded format where most third-place teams advance to the knockout rounds.

Iran starts against low-ranked New Zealand, then plays one of the weaker top-seeded nations, Belgium, and finishes against Egypt.

Iran is likely to be supported in stadiums by its diaspora in the Middle East nation are subject to a ban on entering the country.

Trump's government has promised exemptions from its travels bans for athletes and coaches arriving for major sports events like the World Cup.

Politics around Iran inside World Cup stadiums is nothing new. Protests over domestic issues were aired by Iran fans at the last World Cup.

The FIFA rules FIFA's World Cup regulations envisage a team withdrawing, or being excluded, from the tournament though the legal language is vague.

In that scenario, according to Article 6.7, "FIFA shall decide on the matter at its sole discretion and take whatever action is deemed necessary."

"FIFA may decide to replace the Participating Member Association in question with another association," the rules say.

That legal framing seems to give FIFA president Gianni Infantino wide powers to shape any decision relating to Iran.

Just 18 months ago, the decision announced by Infantino to add Lionel Messi's team Inter Miami to the 2025 Club World Cup lineup appeared to have no basis in formal tournament rules.

Consequences of withdrawing—Should Iran pull out of the World Cup — still hugely speculative — its soccer federation would forfeit at least \$10.5 million.

FIFA pays \$9 million in prize money to each of the 16 federations whose teams fail to advance from the group stage, and all 48 qualified teams get \$1.5 million "to cover preparation costs."

The Iranian federation also would face disciplinary fines from FIFA — at least 250,000 Swiss francs (\$321,000) for withdrawing up to 30 days before the tournament, and at least 500,000 Swiss francs (\$642,000) if the decision is in the last month before kickoff.

Iran would risk being excluded by FIFA from qualifying for the next World Cup in 2030 as well.

Next in line Iran was a fast World Cup qualifier last March, earning one of eight guaranteed places allocated to the Asian Football Confederation.



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