

Rain, Snow Bring Back Winter Chill

Weather Likely To Improve after March 20



Observer News Service

Srinagar: A fresh spell of rain in the plains and snowfall in higher reaches on Wednesday brought back a sharp winter chill across the Kashmir Valley, disrupting normal life and pulling temperatures below seasonal averages.

Intermittent rainfall lashed Srinagar and several other parts of the Valley through the day, while upper reaches, including Gulmarg, Sonamarg, and Pir Ki Gali along the Mughal Road, received fresh snowfall, adding to the cold conditions.

The sudden shift in weather follows a relatively dry and warmer spell earlier this month, with the Valley now witnessing

cloudy skies, persistent precipitation, and gusty winds, reviving conditions typical of peak winter.

Officials at the Meteorological Centre Srinagar said the change is due to an active western disturbance affecting the region. "Widespread cloud cover with light to moderate rainfall in the plains and snowfall in higher altitudes is expected. The weather will remain generally unstable till March 20, with intermittent rain or snow likely at many places, particularly during evening and night hours," an official said.

The wet spell has significantly impacted daily life, with damp and chilly conditions forcing people back into winter clothing. "It had started feeling like spring, but | **More on P6**



A fisherman casts his net over the waters of Dal Lake in Srinagar, with the Zabarwan mountains in the backdrop. KO Photo By Abid Bhat.

Eid In Saudi On Friday



KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Shawwal crescent moon was not sighted anywhere in Saudi Arabia on Thursday, authorities announced, confirming that Eid-ul-Fitr will be observed on Friday, March 20.

According to reports, the crescent marking the beginning of Shawwal 1447 AH was not visible despite efforts across the Kingdom. As a result, the holy month of Ramazan will complete 30 days, with Friday declared as the first day of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The announcement puts an end to speculation surrounding the date of Eid, one of the most significant Islamic festivals marking the conclusion of the fasting month of Ramazan.

Gulmarg Lease Row: HC Closes Petitions As Hoteliers Seek Govt Talks

M Ahmad

Srinagar: The High Court of J&K and Ladakh has disposed of a batch of petitions concerning the high-profile Gulmarg hotels' land lease issue, after petitioners sought permission to withdraw the cases in order to pursue a resolution with the

government.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Arun Palli and Justice Rajesh Oswal allowed the withdrawal earlier this month, noting that the petitioners, mostly hoteliers, intended to approach the government with representations to settle the dispute amicably.

The case arises from the 2022 introduction of the J&K Land Grant Rules by the Union Territory administration, which marked a significant shift in land lease policy. Under the new rules, leases would no longer be automatically extended after expiry. Instead, properties are to be | **More on P6**

LG, CM Send Greetings On Navreh, Navratri

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday extended greetings to the people on the occasion of Navreh, Chaitra Sukladi, Ugadi, Gudi Padava, Cheti Chand and Chaitra Navratri.

In his message, the Lieutenant Governor said these festivals, celebrated across the country, mark the beginning of the New Year and symbolize renewal of faith and hope.

"On the auspicious occasion of Navreh, Chaitra Sukladi, Ugadi, Gudi Padava and Cheti Chand, I extend my | **More on P6**

Jammu To Emerge As Global Spiritual Hub: LG

Calls For Regular Aartis Along Riverbanks



Observer News Service

Jammu: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday called for organising regular evening aartis along riverbanks across the Jammu Division, saying such initiatives would help revive cultural traditions, strengthen spiritual consciousness and position Jammu as a global centre of spirituality.

Addressing devotees after attending Shri Raghunath Ji's Jammu Aarti, the Lieutenant Governor said efforts are underway to present Jammu, widely known as

the "city of temples," as a prominent destination on the global spiritual tourism map.

"Light kindled by Aarti's lamps will awaken the society towards our profound rich culture and connect young generation with timeless verses of our holy scriptures," he said, urging people to organise daily or weekly aartis in towns and villages along riverbanks in collaboration with local communities.

The aarti, organised by Shri Raghunath Ji Ki Jammu Aarti Sanstha, witnessed participation of devotees from | **More on P6**

2018 Kathua Rape & Murder Case

HC Denies Suspension of Life Sentence To Mastermind

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Punjab and Haryana High Court has dismissed a plea seeking suspension of sentence by a convict in the 2018 Kathua rape and murder case, holding that the applicant does not deserve such a concession at this stage.

A division bench of Justices Gurvinder Singh Gill and Ramesh Kumari passed the order on March 6, declining interim relief while directing that the main appeal against conviction be listed for final hearing in September. The three-page order was made available earlier this week.

"Without commenting on the merits of the case, we are of the opinion that it is not a case where the applicant deserves the concession of suspension of sentence at this stage," the court said, dismissing the application.

The convict, a former caretaker of the village temple where the crime took place in January 2018, was sentenced to life imprisonment by a Pathankot sessions court in 2019. Two co-accused were also awarded life terms.

Seeking suspension of the sentence, senior advocate Vinod Ghai argued that despite the examination of 114 prosecution witnesses, no concrete evidence was brought on record to establish his involvement. He also submitted that the convict had already undergone more than eight years in custody and deserved interim relief.

Opposing the plea, senior advocate R S Cheema, appearing for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, argued that the evidence and testimonies on record clearly established the accused's complicity. He | **More on P6**

Oil Tanker Reaches India From War Zone

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Indian-flagged oil tanker Jag Laadki has reached Mundra port in Gujarat after sailing safely from Fujairah in the UAE, despite an attack on the terminal, taking the total number of vessels transiting the conflict-hit zone to four.

The tanker, with 80,886 tonnes of crude oil sourced from the UAE, departed from Fujairah Port following the incident and completed its voyage to Mundra Port on Wednesday, according to shipping sources.

Jag Laadki is the second vessel from the war zone to have reached Adani group's Mundra port. Previously, LPG tanker Shivalik reached the port on Monday.

Adani's | **More on P6**

Banks Earn Rs 19,000 Cr From Minimum Balance Charges In 3 Yrs

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Banks across India have collected nearly Rs 19,000 crore over the past three years from customers for not maintaining the prescribed minimum balance in their accounts, sparking fresh concerns over the burden such charges place on small account holders.

Data shared by the Finance Ministry in Parliament shows that a total of Rs 19,083 crore was collected as penalties during this period. Of this, public sector banks accounted for Rs 8,092.83 crore, while private banks contributed a larger share of the total.

The issue was raised in Parliament, where lawmakers flagged the






disproportionate impact of these charges on low-income groups. A member pointed out that such penalties are often borne by those with limited savings rather than affluent customers.


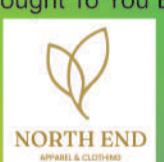
Highlighting the ground-level implications, it was noted that even minor shortfalls in account balances can attract penalties, affecting farmers, pensioners and

daily wage earners who rely on their accounts for essential expenses.


The debate has also brought into focus the broader question of financial inclusion. Critics argue that banking systems meant to safeguard small savings should not penalise customers for maintaining low balances, especially when accounts are primarily used for | **More on P6**


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Study Finds Life-Friendly Conditions on Moons of Free-Floating Planets

Press Trust Of India

Moons orbiting around free-floating planets can keep their oceans in liquid state for up to 4.3 billion years due to dense hydrogen atmospheres and tidal heating -- sufficient time for complex life forms to develop, a study has found. The study findings, published in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society journal, also offer new clues to the origin of life, researchers said. "We discovered a clear connection between these distant moons and the early Earth, where high concentrations of hydrogen through asteroid impacts could have created the conditions for life," said lead author David Dahlbudding, a doctoral researcher at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, Germany. Free-floating planets wander through the galaxy without a parent star. They can be formed during the origin of planetary systems, or when nascent planets come too close, flinging each other out of their orbits. Gas giants -- planets composed mainly of hydrogen and helium, featuring thick atmospheres, deep liquid layers, and without a well-defined solid surface -- ejected from their orbits in this manner do not necessarily lose all of their moons in the process, according to Giulia Rocchetti, physicist at Ludwig Maximilian University. However, the ejection alters the orbits of the moons, making them highly elliptical, due to which their distances from the host planet constantly changes, researchers



tained at the surface. On Earth, carbon dioxide functions as an effective greenhouse gas, the team said, citing previous studies that have shown that carbon dioxide could stabilise life-friendly conditions on exo-moons for periods of up to 1.6 billion years. Under the extremely low temperatures of free-floating systems, however, carbon dioxide would condense, causing the atmo-

sphere to lose its protective effect and allowing heat to escape, researchers said. They investigated hydrogen-rich atmospheres as alternative heat traps. Under high pressures, colliding hydrogen molecules form short-lived complexes that can absorb thermal radiation and retain it in the atmosphere. At the same time, hydrogen remains stable even at very low temperatures, the researchers explained. Free-floating planets are thought to be common, with estimates suggesting there could be as many such 'nomadic' planets in the Milky Way as there are stars. Moons of free-floating planets could provide stable habitats for long periods of time, the team said. The study's findings could thus significantly broaden the spectrum of possible environments that could harbour life, showing that life could arise and endure even in the darkest regions of the galaxy, they said. "We find that such (hydrogen-dominant) atmospheres can effectively trap heat via collision-induced absorption of H2 (hydrogen molecule), maintaining surface temperatures suitable for liquid water for time-scales of up to 4.3 gigayear (4.3 billion years) depending on the surface pressure, while not prone to condensation-induced collapse," the authors wrote. "Wet-dry cycling caused by the strong tides together with the alkalinity of dissolved NH3 (ammonia) could create favourable conditions for RNA polymerisation and thus support the emergence of life," they said.

Public Notice

I want to change name on electricity bill bearing id no: 0213030001042 From Mohd Jamal Lone S/o Mohd Sultan Lone R/o Edipora (Bomai) to Ab Rashid Lone S/o Mohd Jamal Lone . If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Ab Rashid Lone S/o Mohd Jamal Lone
 R/o Edipora (Bomai)

FKO

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KREERI (Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar hassubmitted case file pertainingto Birth of NASEER AHMAD PARRAY S/O TARIQ AHMAD PARRAY R/O. HAIL JAGIR Tehsil KREERI Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth as 24/03/1994 and event has been shown to be occurred at HOME for issuance of delay order .In this connection if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of Birth certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained

Executive Magistrate 1st Class
 KREERI

fko

Public Notice

It is informed to general public that in my passport bearing number N4481976 my name was wrongly entered as Farhat Rasool instead of Syed Farhat Rasool and father's name Peer Lassa Shah instead of Syed Peer Lassa Shah.Now it needs to be corrected. So in this regard have any body any objection he/she may file his/her objection at Regional Passport Office Srinagar within one week of period, from the date of publication of this notice after due date no objection will/ shall be accepted or entertained.

Name:Syed Farhat Rasool.
 S/O: Syed Peer Lassa Shah.
 R/O :Ladhoo Khrew.
 District :Pulwama.

fko

Public Notice

I want to change name on electricity bill bearing id no: --012198 from Gulam Mohammad Sofi S/o Mohammad Shaban Sofi to Ghulam Hassain Sofi S/o Ghulam Mohammad Sofi R/o Sanoora Kali Pora Beerwha Badgam. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Ghulam Hassain Sofi
 S/o Ghulam Mohammad Sofi
 R/o Sanoora Kali Pora Beerwha Badgam

bmg

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth..
 Public Notice

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Seerat Irshad s/ Irshad Ahmad Sofi R/o Haider colony sopore with verified date of birth 20/06/2021 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Sd
 fko Naib Tehsildar Pattan

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed Death..
 PUBLIC NOTICE

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to death of Abdul Rehman Ganie s/o Muktha Ganie R/o Para Mohalla Pattan with verified date of death 15/06/1980 occurred at home in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 07 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Sd
 fko Naib Tehsildar Pattan

از نیابت پٹھان با جلاس نائب تحصیلدار پٹھان درخواست از جانب عنوان :- ریاض احمد پڑو ولد علی محمد پڑو ساکنہ ہمارے تحصیل چٹن بمراد وصول پیدائش سرٹیفکیٹ بحق دفتر صاحب ریاض اشتمار بمراد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان میں ساکن نے ایک درخواست بمراد وصول پیدائش سرٹیفکیٹ بحق صاحب ریاض جو کہ مورخہ 09-01-2019 کو پیدا ہوئی ہے لہذا اس بارے میں ہر خاص و عام مطلع کیا جاتا ہے اگر کسی شخص یا شخص کو مطلوبہ سرٹیفکیٹ اجراء کرنے میں کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو چار دن کے اندر اندر دفتر پڑا میں پیش کریں۔
 نائب تحصیلدار پٹھان

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER SUB TRANSMISSION DIVISION-II, RAJBAGH, SRINAGAR

Short Term Tender Notice
 eNIT No STD-II / 72 of 2025-26 Dated 14-03-2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory, e-Tender (In Two Cover System) is hereby invited from A-class electrical contractors/registered firms enlisted with CPWD/MES/Railways/DGS&D and Inspection Agency for "Augmentation of old 33 KV Pampore Bkpora line from Chanapora bypass to Nowgam bypass Chowk to be utilized for upcoming 2 x 10 MVA, 33/11 KV Receiving Station Budshah Nagar to overcome LCP constraints and accommodating the load" in District Srinagar.

SNO	Description of Work	Earnest Money (In Rs)	Estimated Cost (In Lacs)	Last date of submission of e-bid
01	Augmentation of old 33 KV Pampore Bkpora line from Chanapora bypass to Nowgam bypass Chowk to be utilized for upcoming 2 x 10 MVA, 33/11 KV Receiving Station Budshah Nagar to overcome LCP constraints and accommodating the load	24420.00	Rs 12.21 Lacs	24-03-2026; 4:30pm

- Bidders are advised to study the Bidding Document carefully. Submission of e-Bid against this SBD shall be deemed to have been done after careful study and examination of the procedures, terms and conditions of the Standard Bidding Document with full understanding of its implications by the bidder.
- The tender document is available on website <http://jktenders.gov.in>. Interested bidders may view or download the e-Bid document, seek clarification and submit their e-Bid on line up to date as per the details mentioned in the table below.

A	Date & Time of downloading of Standard Bidding Document	The standard Bidding Document can be downloaded over http://jktenders.gov.in from 16-03-2026; 4:30pm
B	Sale of Bid Document (Start)	16-03-2026; 4:30pm
C	Sale of Bid Document (End)	24-03-2026; 4:30pm
D	e-Bid submission (start) date and time (submission of e-tender fee, EMD and other supporting documents in PDF/XLS format)	16-03-2026; 4:30pm
E	e-Bid submission (End) date and time (submission of e-tender fee, EMD and other supporting documents in PDF/XLS format)	24-03-2026; 4:30pm
F	Online commercial and technical e-bid opening date and time	25-03-2026; 2:30pm
G	Online financial e-bid opening date & time (only of the technically qualified bidders)	Will be communicated to the technically qualified bidders
H	Venue of opening of technical & financial e-bids	The office of Executive Engineer, STD-II, Rajbagh, Srinagar
I	Cost of e-bid document	Rs 1000.00 (Rupees One Thousand Only)
J	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit	Rs 24420.00.00 (Rupees Twenty-Four Thousand Four Hundred and Twenty Only)

- The bidders need to submit the proof/Cost of e-Bid document as stated above through e-Challan/Treasury Receipt pledged to Executive Engineer, STD-II, Rajbagh, Srinagar to be credited to M.H-0801-Power payable at Srinagar. The scanned copy of the e-Challan/Treasury Receipt must be enclosed along with the e-Bids.
- All the e-Bids must be accompanied by the scanned copy of EMD in the form of CDR / FDR only, pledged to the Executive Engineer, STD-II, Rajbagh, Srinagar. No Interest would be payable on Earnest Money deposited with the Department.

- Hard Copy of e-bid (complete) shall have to be submitted to the office of the Executive Engineer, STD-II, Rajbagh, Srinagar only from the bidder who is declared L1 after opening of financial bids.
- The date and time of opening of financial bids shall be notified on web site <http://jktenders.gov.in>. This is conveyed to the qualified bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The financial bids shall be opened accordingly online on the same web site at the office of the Executive Engineer, STD-II, Rajbagh, Srinagar.
- The e-Bids will be electronically opened in the presence of bidder's representatives, who choose to attend at the identified venue on indicated date and time mentioned in the above table or any subsequent day to the convenience of the Tender Opening Committee. An authority letter of bidder representative will be required to be produced.
- The Department reserves the right to cancel any or all the e-Bids/ the e-Bid process without assigning any reason thereof. The decision of department will be final and binding.
- In the event of date specified for e-Bids opening being a holiday/closed day for department's office then the due date for opening of e-Bids shall be the following working day at the same time and place.
- All the required documents excluding Price Schedule/BOQ should be uploaded by the e-Bidder electronically in the PDF format, whereas Price Schedule/BOQ should be up loaded electronically in the same BOQ sheet provided with the SBD.
- To participate in e-bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' class III(b) As per Information Technology Act-2000, to participate in online bidding.
- Hard Copy of requisite documents shall be required to be submitted only by the Lowest Tenderer along with original CDR and e-Challan/Treasury Receipt instantly after opening of e-NIT pledged to Executive Engineer, STD-II, Rajbagh, Srinagar.
- The Name of the Work/Job along with e-NIT reference should be superscripted in bold letters on the envelope and the Name/Firm should be clearly written on the cover.

The name of the bidder and e-NIT no. shall be clearly written on the cover. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. Any other information regarding e-tendering process can be had from the office of the Executive Engineer, STD-II, Rajbagh, Srinagar.

Sd/-
 Executive Engineer,
 Sub Transmission Division-II,
 Rajbagh, Srinagar.

DIPK-NB-3634/25
dated: 18-03-2026

No: STD-II/12029-31/Ts Dated: 14-03-2026

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir Office of the Deputy Commissioner Pulwama

No: DCP/N/2026/Pul/683-90 Dated: 6/03/2026

Subject: Haj-1447 (H) 2026-Conduct of second phase of Orientation /Training Programme for selected pilgrims of Haj-2026.

Press Note

In pursuance of the communication received from Executive Officer Haj Committee Jammu and Kashmir vide No. Haj/2026/124/255-73 dated: 10.03.2026 regarding imparting training about Manasik -e- Haj and other logistic at District level for Haj pilgrims of Haj-1447 (H) 2026, accordingly pilgrims of Haj -2026(Haj-1447) are requested to attend the second phase of orientation /training programme strictly as per the following schedule:

S. No	Date of training	Time	Venue	Pilgrims of Tehsils
01	31-03-2026	10:30AM	Jamia Masjid Sharief Chattapora Pulwama	Pulwama, Rajpora, Kakapora and Shahooria Litter
02	01-04-2026	10:30AM	Jamia Masjid Awantipora	Pampore, Awantipora, Tral and Aripal

DIPK-11971/25
DATED: 18-03-2026

Add. Deputy Commissioner
 Pulwama

Government of Jammu & Kashmir DIRECTORATE OF FLORICULTURE SRINAGAR KASHMIR

Tel-0194-2474234 Fax -2482032 -- email:- kash.flori@jk.gov.in

Subject: Extension Notice No. 02

In view of poor response, the Bid Submission end/ opening date (Online) of technical bids in respect of e-NIT No. 02 of 2026 dated: 28.02.2026 invited by this office under endorsement No. DOFK-GSOTNDR/3/2026/E-7862853 dated: 28.02.2026 having Tender Id No.2026_FLOD_304883_1 with regard to "Outsourcing of Hiring out for plying of (05) No. paddle boats in Mini Lake at NMBG Chesh-mashahi Srinagar" is hereby extended as per the details given below:-

1.	Bid Submission End date & time	02.04.2026	Up to 02:00 PM
2.	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	04.04.2026	At 02:00 PM

Other terms & conditions shall remain same as laid down in the concerned e-NIT.

Sd/- Accounts Officer,
 (Member Secretary)

No: DOFK-GSOTNDR/3/2026/E-7862853
 DIPK-12005/25
 Dated: 18/03/2026

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-Auction Notice

The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Northern Railway, Firozpur for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Auction from eligible and registered bidders for the following works over Firozpur Division:-

Catalogue No.	Auction Start	Name of work
EAFFZ-ADV26-8	27.03.2026 at 11:00 Hours.	Allotment of contract for Advertisement rights: a) Vinyl wrapping on exterior of coaches of Train No. 20424/23, 14622/12/25, 14680/79/82/81 & 12408/07. b) Overhead of 5 Water Tanks at Ludhiana Railway Station. c) Digital Screens at Phillaur & Hoshiarpur Railway Station.
EAFFZ-CTG26-2	01.04.2026 at 11:00 Hours.	Allotment of Catering Stall on contract at Phagwara Railway Station.
EAFFZ-ATM26-6	01.04.2026 at 11:00 Hours.	Allotment of contract for setting up ATM at Firozpur Cantt., Phagwara, Dhandari Kallan, Hoshiarpur, Nawan Shehar Doaba & Fazilka Railway Station.
FZR-Linen-26-5	01.04.2026 at 11:30 Hours.	Allotment of contract for Procurement of Linen Covers with Advertisements rights for supply in AC Coaches of Mail/ Express Trains having primary maintenance over Firozpur Division.

For other details and registration, please visit Railway website www.reps.gov.in. No. NR-FZRCOML(NFR)/18/2024
 Date:- 17.03.2026 901/2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

DC Reviews Digitization of Revenue Records

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Wednesday chaired a meeting of senior Revenue Officers at the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex to review tehsil-wise progress on key revenue matters and to further strengthen service delivery systems across the district, with a special focus on the digitization of revenue records.



The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, SDM West, Irfan Bahadur, SDM East, Zubair Ahmad, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar and all Tehsildars.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner conducted a detailed review of tehsil-wise progress in the digitization of revenue records, updation and attestation of mutations, disposal of public grievances, and delivery of other time-bound services by the Revenue Department.

During the meeting, the

Deputy Commissioner undertook a comprehensive review of progress across all tehsils, particularly focusing on digitization of revenue records, updation and attestation of mutations, disposal of public grievances and delivery of other time-bound services by the Revenue Department. The progress of verification of cases under PMAY 2.0 was also assessed.

The DC also evaluated the performance of online service delivery platforms highlighting its importance in ensuring transparency and efficiency.

Acknowledging the efforts of the Revenue Officers and field functionaries, the Deputy Commissioner asked them to consistently continue their proactive approach in expediting the freezing of Jamabandies and grievance registers across all Tehsils.

Stressing the need for sustained efficiency, the DC called for the adoption of robust and result-oriented mechanisms to enhance overall departmental performance. He directed Officers to ensure prompt and high-quality service delivery to the public, with strict adherence to PSGA timelines, particularly through platforms such as Jansugam and Revenue Plus. He further instructed officials to accelerate the disposal of backlog mutation cases to ensure timely relief to the public.

Div Com Reviews Arrangements for Forthcoming Religious Festivals

Observer News Service

Srinagar: To ensure smooth and peaceful celebrations of the forthcoming religious festivals of Eid-ul-Fitr, Navroz and Navratra, the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg on Wednesday chaired a meeting of officers to review the preparedness and arrangements being put in place across the Kashmir Division.

The meeting was attended by all Deputy Commissioners, Commissioner SMC, SSP Srinagar, Chief Engineer PWD, ARTO Kashmir, Director Sheep Husbandry Kashmir, SSP Traffic Rural Kashmir, Joint Director Information Kashmir, Joint Director FCS&CA and other senior officers of concerned departments.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner briefed the Divisional Commissioner about the arrangements being put in place in their respective districts for the smooth celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr, Navroz and Navratra. They also apprised him regarding the availability and stock position of essential commodities, including LPG, petrol and diesel.

While addressing the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner directed all Deputy Commissioners to ensure meticulous arrangements with regard to the availability of basic facilities, deployment of Magistrates, and effective security and traffic management, particularly at major congregational



places where Eid prayers are scheduled to be held.

He directed KPDCCL to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply across the Kashmir Division on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, especially at Aasar-i-Sharief Hazratbal and other prominent religious places.

The Jal Shakti Department was instructed to ensure adequate and uninterrupted supply of safe drinking water during the festive days.

With regard to essential commodities, the Divisional Commissioner emphasized maintaining adequate stocks and ensuring the availability of all essential items, including LPG, petrol and diesel, across the division so that the public does not face any inconvenience during the celebrations.

The FCS&CA Department was directed to ensure sufficient domestic

LPG stock in all districts and to prevent any shortages.

He further instructed concerned authorities to conduct comprehensive market inspections to curb hoarding, overpricing and the sale of substandard goods. Stressing close coordination among enforcement agencies, he directed that fair pricing and adequate availability of essential commodities, particularly mutton and poultry, be ensured on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Reviewing traffic management measures, the Divisional Commissioner directed traffic authorities to regulate vehicular movement near major mosques and marketplaces. He also emphasized the arrangement of adequate public transport facilities on key routes leading to Hazratbal to facilitate smooth movement of devotees, especially for Eid prayers.

Raja Tasleem's First Death Anniversary Today

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The first death anniversary of late District and Sessions Judge Raja Mohammad Tasleem Khan is being observed on Thursday with respect and remembrance by family members, colleagues, and members of the community.

Raja Tasleem, who served with distinction in the judiciary, was widely known for his integrity, fairness, and unwavering commitment to justice," acquaintances say.



"During his tenure, he earned a reputation as a principled judge who upheld the rule of law and ensured that decisions were guided by both legal merit and ethical values," according to Sajjad Haider, editor of Kashmir Observer.

Senior journalist Sibte Hassan described him as a man of strong character, humility, and compassion. He noted that his courtroom was marked not only by legal discipline but also by a deep sense of humanity.

Raja Mohammad Tasleem, District & Sessions Judge, who was last posted as Special Judge UAPA Sore, passed away on March 19 last year at Medanta Hospital in Delhi after a brief illness, leaving a vast circle of friends and admirers in shock.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
DEN/HQ/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on www.ireps.gov.in with closing date-06/04/2026 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tenders, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on www.ireps.gov.in portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft Banker Cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed. For more information logon to www.ireps.gov.in

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	Single Packet System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Tender Closing Date/Time
13/03/2026	23/03/2026	06/04/2026 & 15:00 Hrs

S.No.	Tender No.	Details of Tender
1.	252-2025-26-ADEN-1-FZR	Provision of Cover Shed at 06 LHS in severely waterlogged LHS No. A-32, C-48, C63, C-75, C-76 & C-79 on LDH-FZR under ADEN-1/FZR.
		Advertised Value (Rs.) Earnest Money Validity of offer Period of completion
		4,12,38,568.70/- 3,56,200.00/- 60 Days 06 Months
		Similar Nature Work :- "Any civil work other than track work."
2.	253-2025-26-DEN-HQ-FZR	Supply of ballast in various yards i.e.w. Improvement to FDK, KKP, MKS, Moga, DAU, A.J.L, JGN, CKM, BRW, LKW, GHA, GZS, RLS, CBX, GJUT & GNA Station Yards under ADEN-1/FZR and Improvement to MXH, JTH, GHS, LDK, FKA, JBD, FZP, FZR, CWDA & KUKA Station Yards under ADEN-2/FZR in the jurisdiction of DEN-HQ/FZR.
		Advertised Value (Rs.) Earnest Money Validity of offer Period of completion
		5,98,71,831.36/- 4,49,400.00/- 60 Days 08 Months
		Similar Nature Work :- "Supply of machine crushed stone ballast for Railways /Highway /Roads."

Note 1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against tender
Tender No:- 252-2025-26-ADEN-1-FZR & 253-2025-26-DEN-HQ-FZR
Date: 17.03.2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 922/26

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice No: 433_Sig_JAT_102_25_26 Date: 18/03/2026
Closing Date/Time: 07/04/2026 15:00
Sr. DSTE/JAT acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders on www.ireps.gov.in against Tender Notice no. 433_Sig_JAT_102_25_26 Closing Date/Time 07/04/2026 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like Net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

NIT HEADER

Contract Type	Works
Name of Work	Augmentation of datalogger and provision of large Format Display in Jammu Division.
Tender closing date	07/04/2026 15:00
Date Time of Uploading Tender	16/03/2026 18:25
Advertised Value (Rs.)	10817282.35
Bidding Start Date as per IREPS	24/03/2026
Earnest Money (Rs.)	204100.00
Period of Completion	4 Months

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 931/2026

عدل وانصاف اور انسانی ہمدردی کا درخشان باب
مرحوم راجہ تسلیم عباس خان کی پہلی برسی پر خراج عقیدت

داؤدی کشمیر کے ممتاز، باوقار اور فاضل جج مرحوم راجہ تسلیم عباس خان صاحب کی پہلی برسی کے موقع پر ان کی گراں قدر خدمات کو یاد کرتے ہوئے دل عقیدت و احترام سے بھر جاتا ہے۔ مرحوم نہ صرف ایک با اصول اور منصف مزاج جج تھے بلکہ ایک بلند کردار، بااخلاق اور دردمند انسان بھی تھے جنہوں نے اپنی پوری زندگی معاشرے کی بہتری کے لیے وقف کیے رکھی۔ بطور جج آپ کی بیچان دیانت داری، غیر جانبداری اور اصول پسندی تھی۔ آپ نے ہمیشہ حق و انصاف کا بول بالا کیا اور مظلوم کی داد دینی اور اپنا شعرا بنایا۔ آپ کی عدالت سے نکلنے والے فیصلے نہ صرف قانونی لحاظ سے مضبوط ہوتے تھے بلکہ اخلاقی و انسانی اقدار کے بھی آئینہ دار ہوتے تھے۔ یہی وجہ ہے کہ آپ کو عوام میں عزت و وقار حاصل تھا۔ مرحوم کی سماجی خدمات بھی کسی تعارف کی محتاج نہیں۔ آپ نے ہمیشہ معاشرے کے کمزور طبقات کے مسائل کو سمجھا اور حتی الوسع ان کے حل کے لیے کوشاں رہے۔ آپ کی شخصیت میں علم، حلم اور خدمت خلق کا حسین امتزاج پایا جاتا تھا۔ تمام عزیز و اقارب، دوست و احباب اور اہل خیر سے انتہائی سادگی کے ساتھ مرحوم کے ایصال ثواب کے لیے خصوصی دعاؤں کا اہتمام کریں۔ بالخصوص سورہ مبارکہ فاتحہ اور سورہ توحید کی تلاوت کر کے مرحوم کی مغفرت اور بلندی درجات کے لیے دعا فرمائیں۔ اللہ تعالیٰ بظہل ائمہ اطہار علیہم السلام مرحوم کو جو ر رحمت میں جگہ عطا فرمائے اور جنت الفردوس میں اعلیٰ مقام نصیب کرے۔ آمین۔

سوگوران: عزیز واقارب

Government of Jammu & Kashmir (UT)
Phone:-01933-295302 E-mail:-techrbpu1786@gmail.com
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION PULWAMA.

TENDER NOTICE
E-NIT No: 174/EEP/RNB/of 2025-26/12382-92 Dated: 16 /03/2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K UT term e-tenders (In Single Cover system) are invited on **%age Basis** from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Government for the following work :-

S. No	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. Lacs.)	Cost of T/D (Rs.)	Earnest Money (In %age)	Time of Completion in working days	Class of Contract	Major Head of Accounts	Administrative Approval No:	Call No:
1	Tahab Chakoora Road at Nownagri.	97.20	1600/-	2% of ADV.cost	120 working days	AAV	MH: UT capex Road sector 2025-26 (Flood damaged works)	AAA: 267-SE/PS of 2026 Dt.27.06.2026	1st call

The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of date given below:-

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	16 - 03-2026
2.	Bid downloading Start Date	16 - 03-2026 from 10:00 A.M
3.	Bid submission Start Date	16 - 03-2026 from 10:00 A.M
4.	Bid Submission End Date	06 - 04-2026 upto 0 4:00 P.M
5.	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	07 - 04-2026 at 11.00 A.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama
6.	Submission of Performance Security(PS)	Within three (03) days of receipt of LOA. (The First lowest successful bidder has to provide 5% of allotted cost as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG and EMD of 2% shall be released after receipt of 5% Performance security.

- Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in the shape of Treasury Challan (Receipt as per Annexure -C (Dedibed to M.H.0059 PWD) and EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to the Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama (The Date of Treasury Challan and EMD should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date.
- The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of bids.
- EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of the Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama
- The Contractors are advised to visit the site and to be aware of the conditions for launching at site of work before quoting the rates.
- The contractor shall also be responsible for any theft/ damage to any of the component at site and the cost of damage/ theft if any shall be deducted from the work done or CDR of the Contractor till completion of work and handing over.
- The 1st lowest bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of contract as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Pulwama within three (03) days after the date of receipt of letter of acceptance and shall be released after successful completion of DLP. The Bank Guarantee should be valid for 45 days beyond DLP.

Head Draftsman Technical Officer Executive Engineer R&B Division Pulwama
DIPK-11995/25 dated: 18-03-2026

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: +9194841 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 5:14
ZUHR 12:40
ASR 4:59
Magrib 6:44
ISHA 8:05

HIJRI CALENDAR
29- Ramadan
1447

This Day In History

- 1984 - STS 41-C vehicle moves to launch pad
- 1991 - Gorbachev says the Soviet Union will cut its oil exports by nearly half
- 2002 - U.S. invasion of Afghanistan: Operation Anaconda ends (started on March 2) after killing 500 Taliban and al Qaeda fighters with 11 allied troop fatalities
- Iraqinvasion of Iraq
- 2003 - Airstrikes by an American and British-led coalition signal the beginning of the invasion of Iraq, without United Nations support and in defiance of world opinion

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Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja
Switchboard: (0194) 2502327 | +91 1947969705
Editorial: (0194) 2502327
Email: editor@kashmirobsrver.net

Dollar Diplomacy

Hegemony disguised as stability has kept the Middle East in perpetual dependency, and Washington's grip remains tighter than it appears.



Dr. Harjeet Singh



The Middle East has spent decades inside a story written by someone else.

Western powers, first European empires and later the United States, built a framework of control so complete that many regional leaders now enforce it themselves.

This arrangement has operated through military bases, banking systems, cultural institutions, and diplomatic rituals that present domination as partnership.

The result is a region where sovereignty remains partial and independence stays elusive.

Antonio Gramsci, the Italian political theorist, understood this dynamic precisely. He argued that lasting power requires more than armies and coercion. Ruling groups maintain control by shaping the very ideas people use to understand their world.

Values, institutions, and common sense itself become tools of authority. Applied to international relations, this means hegemony functions through consent as much as force.

Western influence in the Middle East has mastered this combination. Military interventions secure strategic position while economic and cultural mechanisms secure compliance.

Consider the architecture of this system. American and European forces maintain bases across the region under the banner of counterterrorism and stability. These installations protect shipping lanes and energy corridors while projecting power into every corner of local politics.

Security partnerships train local militaries, supply advanced weapons, and integrate command structures. The benefits flow both ways: regimes gain protection against internal and external threats while Western powers lock in access to resources and geopolitical leverage.

Everyone calls this cooperation, but Gramsci would recognize it as the manufacturing of consent.

Economic mechanisms prove equally decisive, as western-controlled financial institutions, technology standards, and trade networks shape how Middle Eastern states develop and compete. Sanctions punish defiance, and investment and aid reward alignment.

The petrodollar system, established during the 1970s, binds global oil sales to the American currency. This arrangement has fortified Washington's financial dominance while tethering regional producers to dollar-denominated markets.

Oil revenues circulate through Western banks and investment instruments, creating a circular dependency that serves powerful interests on all sides. Regional states gain market access, while Western powers retain influence over energy pricing and monetary stability.

The system appears voluntary because every participant receives something. That appearance masks the fundamental power imbalance at its core.

Cultural and ideological channels complete the structure. Western media, educational exchanges, and international organizations promote particular standards of governance and economic policy. These norms frame how local elites understand progress, legitimacy, and their own interests.

Over time, cooperation with Western initiatives comes to seem like common sense rather than concession. Diplomatic mediation reinforces this effect.

Western governments position themselves as essential brokers in regional conflicts, from peace negotiations to humanitarian crises. By setting agendas and controlling access to dialogue, they

influence outcomes while presenting their role as neutral and stabilizing.

The mediator becomes the referee, and the referee writes the rules.

Several conditions have made this hegemony especially durable in the Middle East. The region possesses extraordinary energy reserves and occupies strategic geography that connects continents. These facts alone guarantee intense external interest.

Political fragmentation compounds the vulnerability, with sectarian divisions, contested borders, and competing ideological movements preventing

the emergence of any unified regional counterweight. External powers exploit these fractures, offering themselves as patrons and problem-solvers.

Meanwhile, many regional governments actively seek Western partnerships for economic survival, military protection, or diplomatic recognition. The dependence becomes mutual, but the benefits remain asymmetrical.

Globalization has deepened these patterns rather than dissolving them. Middle Eastern economies have integrated into worldwide financial markets, communication networks, and technological systems.

This integration creates opportunities while making disengagement from Western influence increasingly difficult. Cultural exchange, migration patterns, and transnational business ties blur any clear boundary between internal and external authority. The hegemony evolves, adapts, and persists.

Current tensions between Washington and Tehran illustrate this evolution in action.

The rivalry operates through sanctions, proxy conflicts, and strategic competition rather than direct warfare. American policymakers frame their pressure as necessary to preserve regional order and protect energy markets. Iranian leaders describe their resistance as defense of sovereignty and challenge to long-standing power hierarchies.

Both positions contain truth, and serve larger interests.

The confrontation demonstrates how hegemonic systems change shape without relinquishing fundamental control. Emerging multipolar dynamics, shifting energy markets, and new regional alignments are gradually altering the balance.

Still, the institutional, financial, and ideological legacies of Western dominance continue shaping diplomatic calculations and public understanding everywhere.

The future of the Middle East will emerge through negotiation with this inheritance.

Western influence will not vanish, and it will transform within a more competitive and contested global order.

The essential question concerns whether regional actors can build genuine autonomy within this transition or merely exchange one form of dependency for another.

Gramsci warned that domination works best when it feels natural.

It ends only when people refuse the story and begin to write their own.

The author hails from Tral and teaches history at Akal University, Bathinda. He writes on the Sikh Empire, historiography, and cultural politics in South Asia.

KO VIEW

Eid Without Excess

Something is shifting in Kashmir as Eid draws near. Mosque sermons repeat a simple message, and social media amplify it in plain words: keep it modest and honest. The valley needs this reminder.

Kashmir has always known simplicity. Life here moves with nature and human connection. Doors open without ceremony, a stranger becomes a guest over tea, and meals expand to include whoever arrives. Warmth never needed display, and Eid essentially grew from this culture.

The festive occasion marks the end of Ramzan, a month of fasting and reflection, and calls people toward gratitude, charity, and reconnection.

But a different mood had started to appear across the valley in recent years. In some spaces, celebrations had turned louder and heavier. Designer clothes, lavish spreads, and curated posts had competed for attention. The festival had begun to turn into a stage for status.

When display takes over, the meaning of Eid recedes. The day begins to perform, and performance always leaves someone out.

Ramzan brings a clear counterbalance and shifts focus from display to meaning. Fasting builds patience and empathy for the underprivileged. Zakat and sadaqah keep charity at the center of faith. These practices restore balance and extend joy beyond the self.

A modest Eid can carry that balance forward. Families can gather without excess. Communities can host shared meals and meals where everyone feels welcome. Young people can turn their energy toward food drives and neighbourhood care.

These compassionate choices redefine the day, as restraint deepens meaning and keeps the joy real.

The economic reality makes this shift mandatory. Many households face tight budgets and uncertain incomes. Social pressure to spend heavily adds strain.

A culture of modesty lifts that burden, and allows people to celebrate within their means. It protects self-respect and keeps the festival inclusive.

Religious leaders and community voices have stepped forward at the right moment. Their message aligns with Kashmir's deeper values.

It asks people to carry Ramzan's lessons beyond a single month. Compassion, restraint, and generosity can guide everyday life in the valley.

CASH COURSE

Read This Before You Buy Anything

Pause Profit

Trust data, and question everything.

Irshad Mushtaq

Have you ever walked into a bank and felt your pulse quicken because the agent promised huge returns with zero risk?

That warm sensation makes us say yes too fast. We believe every guarantee, buy under pressure, and forget to check what the numbers really say.

That is emotional buying, and it costs us big.

The smart way flips the script. Use your brain instead of your heart. Study financial charts and mutual funds. Check long-term returns, weigh risk against reward, and compare everything before you sign a single paper.

The process feels slower at first, but it saves hard-earned cash over time. Most people mix up two distinct products. Insurance gives that safe guarantee feeling, which appeals to our desire for protection. Traditional policies deliver peace of mind, but they often lose to real growth from long-term equity or ETFs.

Bar charts tell the clear story: one line stays flat while the other climbs higher over twenty years.

Emotions cloud judgment so easily, but financial literacy offers the antidote. Awareness workshops throughout India now teach families how to spot mis-selling tricks.

Picture a simple classroom where ordinary people learn to protect their money instead of handing it over blindly.

The next time you face a bank, agent, or website offer, do one easy thing: pause and ask questions. Consider the real value, the fine print, the actual track record, and ignore the shiny promise.

Your future self will thank you for the discipline. Money matters too much to trust with feelings alone.

Think smart, stay calm, and watch your wealth actually grow.

The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial educator.

Letter to Editor

The Red Book Kashmir Forgot

The Lal Kitab, or "red book," held Kashmir's land memory for decades. Every village kept one, wrapped in crimson cloth and filled with handwritten records of ownership, grazing grounds, and water rights. It marked boundaries through living signs like a stream, a walnut tree, or a ridge where sheep crossed at dawn.

Officials opened it first in disputes, courts trusted it, and farmers used it to defend rights their grandfathers had claimed.

The document emerged during colonial settlement operations when British-trained surveyors fanned across the valley to map and classify land. They created multiple registers: the Jamabandi tracked ownership changes while the Girdawari logged seasonal crops. The Lal Kitab served a different purpose by becoming the permanent village archive that was updated only during major settlement revisions and held information of a slower, deeper

kind including soil classifications, irrigation histories, the location of graveyards and cremation grounds, and demographic shifts across generations.

This made the Lal Kitab indispensable because a Tehsildar transferred to a new posting could open its pages and understand the terrain he now administered, a settlement officer could trace whether current cultivation patterns matched historical use, and when villages fought over boundaries the Lal Kitab provided descriptions written decades earlier that were often more reliable than living memory.

Today this system is crumbling. The decline began with administrative neglect as revenue departments shifted attention toward operational records such as mutation entries, current ownership, and digital databases. Lal Kitabs gathered dust in record rooms and were rarely updated even when settlements occurred while younger officers trained on computer screens never learned to

protect aging volumes from decay.

Kashmir's land governance faces enough challenges without adding self-inflicted wounds. The Lal Kitab represents accumulated wisdom consisting of centuries of careful observation written by hand, verified in the field, and maintained through political upheaval and administrative change.

To abandon it now in the rush toward digital efficiency would waste a resource that remains legally valid and practically valuable.

The red books still sit in district offices across Jammu and Kashmir. Their pages hold answers to questions nobody else can answer. The only question remaining is whether anyone will still know to ask.

Sincerely,

Mohammad Amin Mir
miramin354@gmail.com

Hard Times Demand Soft Hearts

Iranian generosity, an Amritsar vendor's fair prices, and a milkman's gift show us the simple choices that can transform hardship into hope right here at home.



Mohammad Ilyas Bhat

A photo from Iran recently appeared on social media and captured widespread attention.

The image showed a man selling potatoes with a label of twenty-five thousand toman, about fifty rupees per sack. His added message drew all the focus.

He invited anyone short on funds to take the potatoes as a gift.

People everywhere noticed the generous spirit behind this decision during war conditions. A person possesses a sensitive heart when he considers the suffering of others at such a moment.

This scene brought back a story one renowned Moulana shared with me many years ago.

The events unfolded in Amritsar soon after Operation Blue Star. Tension filled the city during those uncertain days. Shops stayed closed while movement remained limited. Small traders worked hard to keep their businesses going. Among them was a vegetable vendor who stood on the roadside selling tomatoes.

One customer bought some and paid two rupees per kilogram. Soon another person bought the same amount and paid only one rupee fifty paise.

The Moulana watched from a nearby shop and bought the same vegetables himself. The vendor charged him one rupee seventy-five paise.



Curiosity grew in the Moulana about these different prices for identical tomatoes. He asked the vendor about the varying amounts. The vendor answered with complete honesty.

He said the first man remained a stranger to him. The second had his shop closed for days so he knew the difficulty. The Moulana appeared like an outsider so he offered a concession.

Then the vendor smiled and shared that throughout Amritsar the price stood at two rupees.

That small incident served a profound lesson. The vendor adjusted his prices to match the condition of each person before him. He chose kindness over any form of exploitation amid uncertainty and hardship.

Such awareness builds trust within any community. Kashmir could

benefit greatly if more vendors followed this example during disruptions. Communities grow stronger when sellers recognize needs and respond with flexibility.

I travelled on a highway in India early one morning in the year 2000. My six-year-old daughter sat beside me. I needed to give her some milk with a few biscuits so I searched for a restaurant along the way.

At that early hour, every restaurant stayed closed. After some distance, I noticed a bullock-driven cart carrying milk. I stopped and requested the man to give me a little milk for my child.

The man climbed down from the cart. I held a two-litre bottle and told him I needed only a cup of milk for my daughter. He filled the entire bottle right away.

He did not accept a rupee. He said the first glass was for his Lord, be-

cause God lives in the innocence of a child.

That small gesture left a deep impression on my mind.

Humanity and kindness appear often among the simplest of people. Compassion springs from the purity of the heart rather than wealth or status. Moments like these encourage us to look for generosity in unexpected places.

But sadly, we witness different choices too often during emergencies in our part of world. Prices suddenly rise whenever a crisis hits our region. A few days of road blockade in Kashmir send vegetable prices soaring sky high. Even basic items become out of reach for many families.

During the floods of 2014, our own produce of saag sold for one hundred fifty rupees per kilogram. People raised charges and added to

the burden of suffering.

This approach leaves lasting effects on community spirit, and erodes the bonds that hold us together through tough periods.

This situation raises an important moral question. People need to remember how quickly they themselves could face the same difficulty, as life changes very quickly.

During the past floods, we saw many people sitting helplessly on roadsides who once lived in palatial houses. Comfort and security disappear overnight.

Our religious teachings constantly guide us toward compassion. Allah teaches that mercy shown to those on earth brings mercy from the One in the heavens. The message calls us to act with open hearts daily.

Humanity survives through the kindness people show to one another in moments of hardship. Laws and systems provide structure while the true foundation comes from these personal choices.

Every individual who shows a small act of goodness makes the world a far more livable place.

A little concession, a kind word, or a helping hand during difficult times means more than any grand gesture. These simple acts of humanity keep hope alive in society, and create ripples that extend far beyond the immediate moment.

We can draw from these stories and apply their lessons in our markets and streets.

Vendors can adjust prices for those in clear need. Travellers can share resources freely with families. Everyone can remember the divine call to mercy.

When we make these choices consistently, our homeland grows stronger, and hardship turns into opportunity for connection and care.

The world watches how we respond, and in those moments we show the best of what humanity can offer.

These small decisions define the type of society we live in. Each act



EVERY INDIVIDUAL WHO SHOWS A SMALL ACT OF GOODNESS MAKES THE WORLD A FAR MORE LIVABLE PLACE. A little concession, a kind word, or a helping hand during difficult times means more than any grand gesture. These simple acts of humanity keep hope alive in society.

of generosity adds strength to the fabric that holds us together.

Young people notice these choices and learn from them. They carry those lessons forward into their own lives. Families feel supported and face hardship with a stronger sense of unity. Trust grows, and with it, a shared sense of care.

Kashmir has the chance to lead by example. It can show how a community holds together in difficult times with character and compassion.

— The author works in agricultural seed production and is currently writing his first short story collection in Kashmir.

Ramzan Ends, But the Real Test Begins Now

The fast builds self-control and empathy in powerful ways. Sustaining those gains every day afterward reveals whether the lessons truly took hold.



Prof. M. Aslam

Ramzan comes to a conclusion in these final days. People turn inward to examine the outcomes of the past month with open eyes. Questions arise about whether the fast produced the expected self-reform and self-restraint in daily choices.

Fasting served as a clear path to greater self-control over natural urges. Individuals refrained from basic impulses through faithful practice each day. This approach fostered self-improvement in visible steps. Spiritual growth drew participants closer to God with every passing hour. Daily routines expanded to include usual tasks plus extra prayers and acts of charity. All this unfolded without food or drink during daylight hours.

Hunger became a direct teacher for everyone involved. Participants gained insight into the experiences of the poor through shared discomfort. Empathy developed as understanding grew stronger. This awareness motivated support for those in need through thoughtful actions. Many organized iftar parties with generous invitations to friends and family. Competition emerged in the preparation of these events around lavish spreads. Restraint guided behaviour during the entire period and kept priorities in view.

Self-discipline took center stage as a key outcome of the month. Chain smokers discovered a way to break their patterns through enforced embargo. Constant nibblers found halts in their habits that felt natural. Frequent

coffee drinkers adopted new routines with surprising ease. Continuation of these changes proves essential in the coming months ahead.

Humans combine physical, emotional, biological, and spiritual dimensions into a single being. The fast directed attention toward balance among these elements in practical ways. Animalistic tendencies linked to the stomach came under control each day. Minds gained clarity through the process of daily observance. Spiritual faculties underwent reconstruction that felt lasting.

Health improvements appeared in significant measure for those who participated. Reports from experts confirm multiple advantages backed by solid research. Top dietician Racha Adib detailed four incredible health benefits in an Al Arabiya News piece from July 2014.

An international congress on health and Ramzan took place in Casablanca, Morocco, as early as 1994. Fifty studies received review at the event with focus on medical ethics along with observed health gains for fasters. Hundreds of additional examinations followed in subsequent years and strengthened the evidence. Tranquility settled in the heart and mind during the observance. Blood fat levels moved toward better values with consistent practice. Addictions lost ground in some cases through the enforced break. Fat breakdown accelerated along with weight adjustments that felt sustainable.

Journal articles reinforced these findings with clear data. The Journal of Community Medicine and Health Education published work in January 2012 on psycho-social behaviour and health benefits during the month. Fasting operated as a powerful therapeutic process that supported recovery. Health conditions improved from mild to severe levels for many observers. Blood sugar declined along with cholesterol and systolic blood pressure readings. Decaying tissues broke down while new ones formed inside the body. Weight moved toward nor-



mal levels through natural processes. Stomach and intestines received rest and began repairs during the hours of abstinence. Special night prayers known as tarawih contributed calorie burn to the routine. Estimates place the amount at two hundred calories per session for participants.

Personal experience adds weight to these observations from years of practice. Hypertension has required medication for many years in my own case. Ramzan fasting brings blood pressure back to normal within three days each time without fail. Lipid profiles show dramatic positive shifts after the first week. The desire grows for more frequent periods like this to maintain the gains.

Balance among physical, emotional, biological, and spiritual aspects produces spiritual harmony and healthy living year-round. The month oriented participants toward this equilibrium through repeated daily effort. Anger came under restraint with growing ease. Good deeds increased in number as habits formed. Personal discipline became a daily practice that felt natural. Preparation advanced for life as a dedicated Muslim and responsible citizen in the wider community.

Honesty with our inner selves brings entitlement to divine blessings and protection in return.

Ramzan has reached its end with the final sunset. The moment arrives to apply the lessons learned in

every ordinary hour. Discipline, empathy, and self-control demand continuation in everyday life beyond the month. This sustained effort delivers the full value of the fast in clear and lasting ways.

Only through persistent practice do participants secure lasting transformation and divine favour.

— The author is the former Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU, New Delhi. He is a member of the Collegium of Eminent Social Scientists constituted by the ICSSR, a Fellow of EDI (World Bank), and a Distinguished Fellow at AGRASRI, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. He can be reached at profaslam1@gmail.com.



PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ADDS WEIGHT TO THESE OBSERVATIONS FROM YEARS OF PRACTICE. Hypertension has required medication for many years in my own case. Ramzan fasting brings blood pressure back to normal within three days each time without fail. Lipid profiles show dramatic positive shifts after the first week. The desire grows for more frequent periods like this to maintain the gains.

Over One Cr Public Grievances Received In Last 5 Yrs: Centre



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Over 1 crore public grievances have been received in the last five years, the Lok Sabha was informed on Wednesday.

These grievances were received on the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS), which allows citizens to raise complaints online.

As many as 1,11,89,384 public grievances were received between 2021 and February 2026, Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said in a written reply.

Of these, 20,00,590 grievances were received in 2021, 19,18,238 in 2022 and 19,53,057 in 2023.

In the next two years, 26,15,321 and 22,78,256 grievances were received, and between January and February this year, 4,23,922 were recorded, he said.

"In the year 2025, the average time for disposal of public grievances for central government ministries/departments was 15 days, and 82.1% of grievances were disposed of within the prescribed timeline of 21 days," the minister said.

The Department of

Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) regularly reviews grievance disposal performance of ministries and departments and Union territories through monthly review meetings, he said.

"Ministries/departments and states/UTs with higher pendency or delays are advised to take corrective measures," Singh said.

The government has undertaken several measures to improve accountability and efficiency of the grievance redressal mechanism under CPGRAMS, including implementation of the 10-step reforms, he said.

Further, the Comprehensive Guidelines for Effective Redressal of Public Grievances, issued in August 2024, rationalised the grievance redressal timeline from 30 days to 21 days and mandate the establishment of dedicated grievance cells, emphasis on root cause analysis, action on citizen feedback, and strengthening of grievance escalation mechanisms, Singh said.

A review meeting module has also been operationalised in CPGRAMS to facilitate senior-level review of public grievances, he said.

Strikes on Energy Sites Push Oil Prices Higher

Agencies

Dubai: The escalating conflict between Israel and Iran intensified on Wednesday, with fresh strikes, rising casualties, and growing threats to critical energy infrastructure across the Middle East, pushing global oil prices sharply higher.

Israel continued its campaign targeting Iran's top leadership, reportedly killing Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib in a strike. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz signalled further operations, warning of "significant surprises" ahead. Earlier, senior Iranian figures, including Ali Larjani and Basij chief Gen. Gholam Reza Soleimani, were also killed.

Iran retaliated with missile attacks on Israel and strikes across the Gulf region, including Saudi Arabia's oil-rich Eastern Province. The widening conflict has disrupted energy flows, with Tehran restricting movement through the Strait of Hormuz — a vital route for nearly one-fifth of global oil supplies.

Oil prices rose over 5 per cent to cross USD 108 per barrel, with Brent crude up nearly 50 per cent since the conflict began on February 28, raising concerns over global inflation and economic stability.

A major flashpoint emerged after US attack on Iran's South Pars gas field, shared with Qatar. In a rare move Gulf countries condemned the strike as a dangerous escalation.

IRGC spokesman Lt. Col. Ebrahim Zolfagari stated that facilities in countries used to



launch attacks on Iran would be "set ablaze," while warning civilians to stay away from key energy sites in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar.

Iranian officials also reported damage to gas facilities in Asaluyeh following what they described as joint US-Israeli airstrikes. The IRGC Navy further warned it has expanded its list of targets to include oil installations tied to US interests.

Tehran has defended its restrictions in the Strait of Hormuz, saying the waterway remains open but not for "hostile nations," while continuing missile operations, including the use of multiple-warhead systems against Israel.

Iran maintains that its actions are defensive and aimed at countering Israeli and US aggression. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) warned that energy infrastructure linked to the United States and its allies

could be targeted in retaliation.

Regional and Global Impact The conflict has spread beyond Iran and Israel, with Israeli strikes in Lebanon targeting Hezbollah positions in Beirut and the Bekaa Valley, killing several people and displacing over a million residents, according to Lebanese authorities.

Meanwhile, Gulf nations have begun rerouting oil exports to bypass the Strait of Hormuz, while Iraq announced plans to resume exports via Turkey.

The United States has moved to ease sanctions on Venezuela in an effort to stabilise oil markets, as concerns grow over prolonged supply disruptions.

With no immediate de-escalation in sight, analysts warn the conflict risks evolving into a broader regional war, with severe implications for global energy security and economic stability.

Cabinet Approves Rs 2,585 Cr Small Hydro Power Development Scheme

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Centre on Wednesday decided to provide up to 30 per cent of the project cost, or up to Rs 3.6 crore per MW, in aid for small hydro projects under a new Rs 2,585 crore scheme for the development of about 1,500 MW clean energy capacity.

The Union Cabinet, in its meeting on Wednesday, cleared the Small Hydro Power Development Scheme with an outlay of Rs 2,585 crore for five years from 2026-27 to 2030-31, an official statement said.

The scheme is expected to attract about Rs 15,000 crore in investment in small hydro projects of up to 25 MW capacity.

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the 'Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme for period FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31' with an outlay of Rs 2584.60 crore for installation of SHP projects of an approximate capacity of 1500 MW, the statement said.

The scheme will support small hydro projects (between 1-25 MW capacity) to come up in different states and will especially benefit hilly and North Eastern states with high potential for such projects.

In North Eastern States and in districts with international border, central financial assistance to the tune of Rs 3.6 crore per MW or 30 per cent of the project cost, whichever is lower, with an upper limit of Rs 30 crore per project will be

available, it stated.

In other states, Rs 2.4 crore per MW or 20 per cent of project cost, whichever is lower, with a cap of Rs 20 crore per project, would be available.

This will help in tapping the small hydro potential in remote and difficult-to-reach locations.

An amount of Rs 2,532 crore has been earmarked for such projects.

This is likely to bring in Rs 15,000 crore of investment in the small hydro sector giving a boost to the clean energy initiative, investment in remote and rural areas and creating significant employment opportunities, it stated.

The investment will also leverage 100 per cent of the plant and machinery from indigenous sources fulfilling the objective of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

The scheme will also incentivise the states to prepare detailed project reports for about 200 projects, creating a pipeline of small hydro projects in the future.

An amount of Rs 30 crore has been kept to support state and central government agencies to prepare such DPRs.

The scheme will support 51 lakh person days of employment during the project construction and will also enable employment in maintenance and operation of these SHPs which will come up in largely rural and remote locations, the statement said.

The launch of this scheme will rejuvenate the Small Hydro Power sector and will help exploit the available potential at a much faster pace.

Cybercrime Incidents Against Women Rise By Over 28,000 Since 2024: Govt

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Over 76,650 cybercrime incidents against women such as online abuse, obscene content and stalking were reported on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP) in 2025, an increase of 28,322 since 2024, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday.

In a written reply, Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said the complaints include cases related to sexually obscene material, sexually explicit acts, rape or gang rape-related sexually abusive content and child sexual abuse material reported online.

Sharing year-wise figures of the number of cybercrime incidents related to crimes against women reported on the NCRP in the last five years, the minister said the number of such complaints stood at 52,048 in 2021, 62,224 in 2022, 40,066 in 2023, 48,335 in 2024 and 76,657 in 2025.

The data showed that complaints related to sexually obscene material were the highest in 2025 at 37,743, followed by sexually explicit acts at 19,703, rape or gang rape-related sexually abusive content at 8,780 and child sexual abuse material at 10,431.

The minister also gave details



of incidents reported under the "online and social media related crime" category, which include offences such as cyberstalking, fake profiles and identity theft which showed a rising trend.

According to the data, complaints in this category increased from 72,301 in 2021

to 1,31,634 in 2022, 1,41,264 in 2023, 1,57,054 in 2024 and 1,73,766 in 2025.

Among these, cyberbullying, stalking or sexting accounted for 45,832 complaints in 2025, while fake or impersonating profiles accounted for 46,784 cases and profile hacking or identity theft for 34,533 cases. Cheating by impersonation accounted for 23,252 complaints during the year.

Other incidents reported in 2025 included 11,126 cases of online job fraud, 7,595 cases related to provocative speech for unlawful acts, 2,240 cases of e-mail phishing, 754 cases of impersonating e-mail, 522 cases

of intimidating e-mail and 1,128 cases of online matrimonial fraud.

In the reply, Kumar said, "Police and Public Order are State subjects as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. The States/UTs are primarily responsible for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of crimes including cybercrime against women through their Law Enforcement Agencies."

He added that the Centre supplements the initiatives of states and Union Territories (UTs) through advisories and financial assistance under various schemes for capacity-building of

law enforcement agencies.

"To strengthen the mechanism to deal with cyber crimes, including cyber crimes against women in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, the Central Government has taken steps," the minister said, listing initiatives including financial assistance of Rs 132.93 crore under the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) scheme.

The government has also set up the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre to deal with cyber crimes in a coordinated manner and launched the NCRP portal to enable citizens, to report cybercrime incidents,

with special focus on crimes against women and children.

According to the reply, cyber forensic-cum-training laboratories have been commissioned in 33 states and UTs and more than 24,600 law enforcement personnel, public prosecutors and judicial officers have been trained on cybercrime awareness, investigation and forensics under the scheme.

The government also highlighted initiatives such as the National Cyber Forensic Laboratory, the CyTrain online training platform and nationwide awareness campaigns to strengthen cyber safety and response mechanisms.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Rain, Snow Bring

now it feels like winter again," said a resident in Srinagar.

Temperatures across the Valley have dropped noticeably. Srinagar recorded a maximum of 14.9°C on Tuesday, more than one degree below normal, while other stations also reported below-average daytime temperatures. Cloud cover has led to colder days, although nights have remained relatively warmer.

Higher reaches have been witnessing intermittent snowfall since Sunday, with forecasts indicating moderate to heavy snowfall in parts of south Kashmir and the Chenab Valley. The Meteorological Department has also warned of thunder, gusty winds reaching 40-50 kmph, and isolated hailstorms through March 20.

Authorities have issued advisories, particularly for mountainous areas and key routes, where fresh snowfall could lead to slippery conditions and temporary disruptions.

Farmers have been advised to suspend agricultural operations until March 20 due to the prevailing weather conditions. However, the precipitation has brought some relief, replenishing soil moisture after a prolonged dry spell and supporting upcoming agricultural activities.

The weather department has forecast gradual improvement after March 20. However, another wet spell is likely between March 26 and 28, with scattered rain in the plains and snowfall in higher reaches.

March typically marks the transition to spring in Kashmir, but the current conditions underline the Valley's unpredictable weather, with winter making an untimely return.

Gulmarg Lease

put up for auction through open bidding, making them accessible to any Indian citizen.

The impact is particularly pronounced in Gulmarg, where a majority of hotels are built on leased land. Of the 59 hotels in the resort, 55 leases have expired, leaving proprietors at risk of eviction and public auction. The High Court had heard the matter on multiple occasions, with the petitioners' lawyers having concluded their arguments.

However, on the day of the last hearing, senior counsel Z. A. Shah requested withdrawal to allow the petitioners to first approach the government with their representations. In

response, Senior Additional Advocate General Mohsin Qadri assured the court that the government was open to a "fair, reasonable and equitable" solution, and that any representations filed within two weeks would be duly considered after hearing the petitioners.

Several connected contempt petitions were disposed of as infructuous, and some writ petitions were dismissed as withdrawn on instructions from counsel. The Bench noted that considerable judicial time had already been invested in the matter, and observed that the proceedings might have concluded but for the changed stance of the parties.

"But before we part with the matter, we may hasten to record that we had heard these petitions at length on numerous occasions and invested considerable judicial time to take the matter to its logical end," the court said, adding, "And but for the changed position that has emerged before the Court, possibly we would have concluded the proceedings today itself."

LG, CM Send

greetings and good wishes to all. May these festivals bring prosperity, peace and happiness in everyone's life and promote the spirit of oneness and harmony," he said.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, in his message on Chaitra Navratri, said the festival signifies the triumph of truth, righteousness and virtue over evil.

"On this auspicious occasion, I extend my warm wishes to everyone for their success, happiness and well-being," he said.

The Chief Minister also conveyed his greetings to the Kashmiri Pandit community on the occasion of Navreh.

"May these festivals strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and inspire us to dedicate ourselves to the service of humanity," he added.

Jammu To Emerge

different walks of life. The Lieutenant Governor described the ritual as a reflection of India's timeless reverence for Nari Shakti and Ardhanarishvar, invoking divine blessings for all.

"Aarti is the discipline of the soul. It is a conscious and awakened effort to inspire the society to look at the source of our existence and be grateful," he said.

Highlighting the deeper spiritual significance

of such gatherings, Sinha said that every flame lit during the aarti symbolises devotion, while every prayer represents a dialogue with the infinite and a step towards inner awakening.

"In this rapidly changing world, we need a meditative moment to remind ourselves about the greatest treasure that exists within us. Jammu Aarti provides an opportunity to rediscover this priceless inner wealth," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also underlined the potential of the initiative to boost spiritual tourism and local economy. He said devotees visiting Mata Vaishno Devi and Amarnath shrine would get an opportunity to experience the spiritual radiance of Jammu through such aartis.

He further said such gatherings play a crucial role in helping the younger generation understand and imbibe the values of the region's spiritual legacy.

"Youth must realize that they have inherited a precious legacy. It is not an inheritance of wealth or position, but of an inner treasure," he said.

Dr Ritu Singh, Chairperson of Shri Raghunath Ji Ki Jammu Aarti Sanstha, along with other office bearers, prominent citizens and devotees were present on the occasion.

HC Denies

submitted that once guilt has been established by the trial court, the presumption of innocence no longer applies, and the convict does not deserve to be released on bail.

Advocates Mandeep Singh Basra and Anupinder Brar represented the victim's family. According to the chargesheet filed by the Jammu and Kashmir Crime Branch in April 2018, the eight-year-old nomadic girl was abducted on January 10, kept sedated inside the temple premises for several days, and repeatedly assaulted before being killed.

The case had sparked nationwide outrage, prompting the Supreme Court to transfer the trial from Jammu and Kashmir to Pathankot and direct day-to-day proceedings.

In its 2019 verdict, the trial court described the crime as "devilish and monstrous," carried out in a "shameful, inhumane and barbaric manner," and convicted multiple accused, including three police personnel for destruction of evidence, while acquitting one of the accused.

The High Court has now fixed the appeal for final hearing later this year, noting that the convict has already spent a substantial period in custody. (PTI)

Oil Tanker

Mundra port provided the safe berthing of the vessel and maritime coordination in safeguarding vital energy lifelines of India, they said.

All 22 Indian seafarers onboard are reported safe.

Originally, there were 28 Indian-flagged vessels in the Strait of Hormuz when the war in West Asia broke out following US-Israel attacks on Iran. Of these, 24 were on the west side of the strait and 4 on the east side. In the last one week, two vessels from each side have managed to sail to safety.

LPG carrier Shivalik reached Mundra on Monday while another LPG tanker Nanda Devi reached Kandla port in Gujarat early on Tuesday morning. The two ships carried about 92,712 tonne of LPG - equivalent to a day's requirement of cooking gas in the country.

Two LPG carriers started their journey on March 13 and crossed the Strait of Hormuz early on March 14.

Another tanker, Jag Prakash, carrying gasoline from Oman to Africa, had previously safely crossed the strait and is en route to Tanzania.

This takes the number of Indian-flagged vessels or ships to have safely navigated through the war zone to four.

Of the 24 Indian-flagged vessels, 22 are on the west side of the strait with 611 seafarers onboard, while two are on the east side.

Of the 22 remaining Indian-flagged vessels on the west side of the Strait of Hormuz, six are LPG carriers, one is a liquefied natural gas (LNG) tanker, four are crude oil tankers, one is transporting chemical products, three are container ships, and two are bulk carriers. Additionally, one vessel is a dredger, another is empty with no cargo, and three are in dry dock undergoing routine maintenance.

The Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway that connects the Persian Gulf to the open ocean, has effectively been shut following the US and Israel attack on Iran and Tehran's sweeping retaliation.

Overall, close to 500 tanker vessels remain confined within the Persian (Arabian) Gulf.

These include 108 crude oil tankers, 166 oil product tankers, 104 chemical/product tankers, 52 chemical tankers and 53 other tanker types.

Analysts say Iran may be allowing select vessels to transit the strait after verification. At least 4 vessels have transited outbound the strait in the last couple of days with a short diversion via the Larak-Qeshm Channel.

This, they say, appears to be a verification process whereby Iran confirms the ownership, cargo and vessel are not of the US, or belongs to those that Iran has permitted transit to.

The ships that have passed are 3 bulk carriers (2 Greek / 1 Indian) and one aframax tanker (Pakistan).

India imports about 88 per cent of its crude oil, 50 per cent of natural gas, and 60 per cent of LPG. Before the war broke out, more than half of the crude oil that India imported came from countries like Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the UAE, which use the strait for shipping.

As much as 85-95 per cent of LPG and 30 per cent of the gas came through the strait. While the disruption in crude oil has been partially offset through alternative sources, such as Russia, West Africa, the US and Latin America, gas and LPG supplies to industrial and commercial users have been curtailed.

Banks Earn

basic financial security. There have been calls to review or withdraw minimum balance requirements to ease the burden on vulnerable sections. However, under existing regulations, banks are permitted to set their own minimum balance thresholds and levy charges for non-compliance.

At the same time, zero-balance accounts, such as Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts, remain exempt from such penalties. The issue of minimum balance charges has surfaced repeatedly in policy discussions, with banks maintaining that such fees help cover operational costs, while critics contend that they place undue pressure on those least able to afford them.

The latest disclosures have once again drawn attention to the need for balancing banking practices with the goals of accessibility and inclusion, particularly for customers who depend on basic banking services for everyday needs

One in Five Adults in Jammu Diabetic, 12% in Kashmir

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: With diabetes cases witnessing a speedy rise across Jammu and Kashmir, health experts are raising concerns over what they describe as a "silent epidemic" in the region.

As per the data available with KNO, nearly 20 percent of adults in Jammu and around 10-12 percent in Kashmir are living with Diabetes Mellitus.

Doctors say that while medication plays an important role, diet and lifestyle remain the cornerstone of effective diabetes management.

As per the 2023 guidelines issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research, over 10.1 crore people in India are currently affected by diabetes, making it one of the fastest-growing health challenges in the country.



"Diabetes is a long-term condition where blood sugar levels remain elevated either due to insufficient insulin production or the body's inability to use it effectively," said Dr Murtaza, a senior physician. "If not managed properly, it can lead to serious complications including nerve damage, kidney disease,

and cardiovascular problems." He said a well-planned diet can significantly help in stabilising blood sugar levels, maintaining a healthy weight, and preventing complications. "Incorporating foods with a low glycemic index, rich in fibre and nutrients, is crucial for better glucose control," he said

Experts recommend a diet built around complex carbohydrates - whole grains, legumes and vegetables - to avoid sudden sugar spikes. Fibre-rich foods slow glucose absorption and improve digestion, while proteins such as fish, poultry, tofu, eggs and pulses help maintain muscle health and satiety. Healthy fats from nuts, seeds and olive oil should be used in moderation. Eating smaller, balanced meals at consistent times helps regulate calorie intake and stabilise blood sugar levels.

For a practical daily plan, doctors suggest fresh fruits such as guava or papaya in the morning; moong dal or grilled chicken with mixed vegetable curry, cucumber salad for lunch; and grilled or steamed fish with leafy greens such as methi or spinach, a small portion of red rice or

one phulka, and warm low-fat milk with turmeric for dinner. Roasted chickpeas or boiled egg whites with unsweetened herbal tea make for a healthy snack.

Doctors advise choosing whole grains over refined carbohydrates, limiting high glycaemic foods such as white rice and potatoes, avoiding deep-fried and sugar-laden foods and staying hydrated with water, buttermilk or herbal teas.

"The key lies in balanced meals, mindful portions and smart food choices," said Dr Muzaffar Ahmad. "Healthy eating does not mean compromising on taste; it means making better choices."

With cases rising steadily across J&K, health professionals are urging people to adopt preventive measures early, stressing that lifestyle changes today can prevent serious complications tomorrow.

GOC Sharawat Reviews Preparedness of Troops in Kathua

JAMMU: General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Rising Star Corps, Lieutenant General Rajan Sharawat today reviewed the operational preparedness of troops deployed in the Bani-Machhedi sector of Kathua district.

An official told KNO that the review came amid heightened security focus in the mountainous belt of Bani-Machhedi. "The area has witnessed multiple terrorist related incidents, including attacks and encounters over the past two years," he said, adding, "The area is considered a sensitive infiltration route from the International Border, with connectivity towards the districts of Doda, Kishtwar and Udhampur."

During the visit, the Corps Commander assessed the readiness levels, deployment patterns and operational capabilities of the troops stationed in the high-altitude terrain, the official said, adding, the commander expressed satisfaction over their state of preparedness and commended personnel for maintaining high morale and professionalism under challenging conditions.

"The Army has significantly strengthened its presence in the Bani-Machhedi sector over the past year, with additional troop deployments aimed at countering infiltration attempts and ensuring area domination. The increased focus on surveillance and operational readiness is part of broader efforts to secure vulnerable routes and maintain stability in the region," the official said, adding that such reviews are conducted periodically to ensure that forces remain prepared to effectively respond to evolving security challenges along the International Border and adjoining hinterland areas. (Observer News Service)

Police Cracks Down on Illegal Mining in Pulwama, Anantnag

SRINAGAR: Continuing its drive against illegal mining, Police have seized 08 vehicles in Pulwama and Anantnag, involved in illegal extraction and transportation of minerals.

According to a statement issued to Kashmir Observer, in Pulwama, police conducted a special operation in the areas of Akhal and Drubgam in Rajpora and seized 05 vehicles including 02 JCB machines, 01 dumper, and 02 tractors, involved in illegal extraction and transportation of minerals. Accordingly, cases FIR No. 34/2026 and FIR No. 35/2026 have been registered under relevant sections of law in police station, and further investigation has been taken up.

In Anantnag, Police achieved a significant success during a naka checking operation conducted by Police Station Aishmuqam at Badigam Aishmuqam. During the checking, the police party intercepted and seized three tractors found to be carrying illegally extracted bajri from Nallah Liddar. The vehicles were immediately taken into custody. In this regard, a case under relevant sections of law has been registered at Police Station Aishmuqam, and further investigation has been set into motion.

Police reiterates its commitment to act firmly against illegal mining activities and urges the public to cooperate in safeguarding natural resources. (Observer News Service)

Northern Army Commander Lauds Troops for Foiling Infiltration Bid

JAMMU: Northern Command Army Commander Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma visited the Jhangar Battalion in Poonch and reviewed the security situation and operational preparedness in the sector following the successful conduct of Operation Ballyyan.

Army's Jammu based spokesperson, while sharing the details, according to KNO wrote on X: "The Army Commander's visit came in the wake of a successful anti-infiltration operation in which alert troops foiled an infiltration attempt."

"Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, Army Cdr NC, visited Jhangar Battalion on successful conduct of OPBALLYYAN wherein the alert troops successfully eliminated the infiltration attempt," the Corps said. (Observer News Service)

Evacuation Efforts Continue as Some Students Return Safely from Iran

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The evacuation of Indian medical students from war-hit Iran has entered a critical phase, with several students returning safely while hundreds remain stranded at border points, particularly along the Azerbaijan-Iran corridor.

Growing uncertainty and logistical hurdles have triggered panic among students and their families, prompting urgent appeals for intervention by higher authorities.

According to details obtained by KNO, a batch of 20 Indian students evacuated via Armenia landed safely in India at 9:55 AM on Tuesday.

Moreover, four students who had earlier crossed into Azerbaijan arrived in India from Baku at 3:40 AM. While these evacuations have offered some relief, a much larger group continues to face distressing conditions.

The situation is especially alarming at the Azerbaijan-Iran border, where an estimated 200-250 Indian students are reportedly stuck. Authorities in Azerbaijan have made it mandatory for students to possess specific "travel codes" to cross the border and proceed to Baku airport. In the absence of these codes, many students have been denied passage, leaving them stranded in uncertain

and tense circumstances.

Dr Mohammad Momin Khan, Vice President of the All India Medical Students' Association (AIMSA), said that several students are unable to move forward despite having valid travel documents. "Many students have suffered financial losses as their non-refundable flight tickets from Baku have gone unused due to the delays," he said.

Parents of stranded students have expressed concern over the safety and well-being of their children. In a formal communication addressed to authorities, including External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, they stated that their wards had booked flights from Baku to Mumbai on March 19, 20, and 23. However, due to the non-issuance of required travel codes by Azerbaijani authorities, students are unable to reach the airport.

"With great concern, we wish to bring to your notice that our children are stranded at the Astra border crossing between Iran and Azerbaijan. Despite having confirmed tickets, they are being denied movement due to a lack of travel codes. The students are frightened and vulnerable. We request immediate intervention to ensure their safe evacuation," the parents said in their letter.

Tourist Surge Signals Confidence in J&K: Parliamentary Panel

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A parliamentary panel has observed that the increase in foreign tourist arrivals in Jammu & Kashmir reflects growing international confidence in it as a tourist destination.

In its report, the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Home Affairs expressed satisfaction over tourist arrivals in Jammu & Kashmir. "The Committee notes with satisfaction the significant growth in tourist arrivals from 2022 to 2024, with total footfall increasing from 1.88 crore to 2.36 crore. The sharp increase in foreign tourist arrivals from about 20,000 in 2022 to over 65,000 in 2024 is particularly noteworthy and reflects growing international confidence in the Union Territory as a tourist destination," reads the report, a copy of which is in possession of Kashmir Observer. The report was tabled in Parliament on Monday (March 17, 2026).

The Committee further observed that although there was a decline in tourist arrivals in 2025 compared to 2024, largely attributable to the Pahalgam incident, the sector demonstrated resilience, with recovery visible from



June 2025 onwards.

"The cumulative footfall of approximately 1.78 crore by December 2025 indicates restoration of confidence and sustained interest among visitors," the report states.

In its report, the Committee said that tourism continues to be one of the key drivers of economic activity and employment generation in the Union Territory. "The upward trend in tourist arrivals in recent years has contributed significantly to livelihoods in hospitality, transport, handicrafts, and allied sectors," reads the report.

The Committee recommended that the development of emerging destinations must be accompanied by adequate infrastructure, waste management systems, carrying capacity assessment, connectivity improvement, and local community participation.

"A long-term sustainable tourism strategy should be prepared, integrating environmental safeguards

and tourist carrying capacity norms. Infrastructure development initiatives at emerging destinations may be expedited in a time-bound manner with clear outcome indicators," the report states.

The Committee further recommended that greater emphasis be placed on high-value tourism segments such as eco-tourism, adventure tourism, and winter tourism. "Skill development and entrepreneurship support should also be provided to local youth to maximize livelihood benefits. Measures for periodic monitoring of tourist satisfaction, safety perception, and infrastructure adequacy could be initiated," reads the report.

The panel reiterated that tourism has emerged as a vital sector for the economic revitalization of Jammu & Kashmir, and sustained focus on diversification, infrastructure strengthening, and confidence-building measures will be essential to maintain the growth momentum.

Peak Power Demand in J&K Likely to Surge by 6%

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir is likely to face a four percent Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) increase in electricity requirement and six percent increase in peak electricity demand for the period of 2025-26 to 2035-36.

The official documents available with KNO reveal that it has considered electrical energy requirement projections as per J&K State Load Despatch Center (SLDC).

The documents reveal that the SLDC has projected that the annual electrical energy requirement of the UT is likely to grow at a



CAGR of 4 percent while the peak electricity demand for the utility is likely to grow at a CAGR of 6 percent for the period of 2025-26 to 2035-36.

About the day-wise surplus coal capacity, the documents said that the surplus capacity is avail-

able with the Union Territory due to RE availability, demand variation etcetera..

"The UT has likely surplus capacity of around 700-900 MW during May to June months and 500 MW from July to September in 2028-29 which can be shared with other states

and Discoms," it reads.

It also said that this capacity can be shared with other states and Discoms and reduce the fixed cost burden on the utility resulting in reduction in the cost to consumers.

Earlier in the previous week it was reported that Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are likely to depend on nearly 30 percent of coal based energy by the year 2030.

The official documents available in this regard reveal that the likely total projected contracted capacity for the year 2035-36 is around 11,001 Megawatts (MW).

"The projected contracted capacity consists of 3239

MW from coal, 129 MW from gas, 68 MW from nuclear, 3666 MW from hydro, 2040 MW from solar, 598 MW from Distributed Renewable Energy (DRE) and 1261 MW from MTOA or STOA," it reads.

The documents further reveal that the capacity shall be able to meet the projected demand with prescribed reliability criteria.

It also said that any deviations in the commissioning schedule of the planned capacity could result in a situation where the UT is unable to meet the projected peak demand and energy requirements identified with the available resources.

Grand Mufti Nasir-ul-Islam Condemns 'Aggression Against Iran'

Syed Mohammad Burhan

SRINAGAR: The Grand Mufti of Jammu and Kashmir, Nasir-ul-Islam, on Wednesday strongly denounced what he described as "aggression against Iran," sharply criticising the ongoing US- and Israel-led war and terming it a grave injustice unfolding during the holy month of Ramadan.

In a message issued ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, the Grand Mufti took a firm stance on international developments, accusing Israel under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of waging a war that has led to significant civilian suffering. He described the escalation as deeply troubling, particularly given its timing in a sacred period, and expressed anguish over the loss of innocent lives, including students and unarmed civilians.

He also criticised the role of the United States, alleging that its support has contributed to instability and prolonged injustice in the region. Paying tribute to those killed in

Mirwaiz Hails Iran's Resolve, Calls Out 'Proxy' Muslim Leadership

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Mirwaiz Umar Farooq on Wednesday strongly condemned the targeted killing of Iranian politician Ali Larijani, describing it as an act by a "rogue state."

In a post on X, Mirwaiz said the resilience displayed by the people of Iran and their leadership reflects the essence of a "true Muslim nation"—one that is courageous, steadfast and rooted in firm faith in Almighty Allah. He asserted that such resolve and conviction make them worthy of leadership.

At the same time, Mirwaiz took a critical view of other Muslim nations, stating that many leaders in the Islamic world have "exposed themselves as proxies," lacking both courage and conviction in the face of adversity.

the conflict, the Grand Mufti described them as martyrs and called for prayers in their memory. He further expressed condolences over the reported passing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei, terming it a profound loss with deep spiritual implications. However, tempering his remarks,

the Grand Mufti urged people not to view the situation through a sectarian prism. He emphasised that the issue transcends sectarian divides and should instead be seen as a broader question of justice and human dignity, calling for unity and collective moral responsibility. Extending Eid greetings to the

Muslim community, he said the festival would be celebrated following the sighting of the Shawwal moon, expressing hope that Eid ushers in peace, success, and spiritual renewal.

He also appealed to the public to celebrate the occasion with simplicity and compassion, urging people to ensure that zakat and Sadaqat-ul-Fitr reach the deserving. Highlighting the plight of those who suffer in silence, he called on society to extend help proactively, noting that generosity carries greater virtue than receiving.

Raising concern over local issues, the Grand Mufti criticised rising prices and alleged profiteering in essential commodities such as bread, meat, and vegetables, warning that such practices are placing an undue burden on already strained households.

In his concluding remarks, he called upon traders and citizens alike to uphold ethical values and social responsibility, stressing that the true spirit of Eid lies in compassion, justice, and collective welfare.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
APPLICATION FOR STATION TICKET BOOKING AGENT

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Northern Railway, Jammu for and on behalf of the President of India Invites sealed Single Packet Application for prescribed for the undernoted STBA (Station Ticket Booking Agent) work:

SN	Station Name	Station code	Category of Station	EMD required (in Rs.)	Application form cost (in Rs)	Period of contract
1	Kopar Lahar	KPLR	NSG6	2000/-	1180/-	Three Years
2	Bharoli	BHRL	NSG6	2000/-	1180/-	Three Years
3	Jakholahri	JK	NSG6	2000/-	1180/-	Three Years
4	Bhogpur Sriwal	BPRS	NSG6	2000/-	1180/-	Three Years
5	Chhina	CHN	NSG6	2000/-	1180/-	Three Years
6	Talara	TLRA	NSG6	2000/-	1180/-	Three Years
7	Mirthal	MRTL	NSG6	2000/-	1180/-	Three Years
8	Palampur Himachal	PLMX	NSG6	2000/-	1180/-	Three Years
9	Ghagwal	GHGL	NSG6	2000/-	1180/-	Three Years
10	Bhangala	BNGL	NSG6	2000/-	1180/-	Three Years
11	Nagrota Suriyan	NGRS	NSG6	2000/-	1180/-	Three Years

Applications will be received only in Sealed Packet in Commercial Branch, DRM Office, Jammu between 10:00 to 15:00 hrs on 08.04.2026.
For further details please visit on Railway's website nr.indianrailways.gov.in
For Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Jammu
907/2026
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Govt. Of Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
IRRIGATION & F C DIVISION BARAMULLA

CORRIGENDUM-I

Subject: Extension Notice.
Reference: This office e-Bid Notice No. 08 of 2025-26 Dated: 21/02/2026 issued under endorsement No: No: I&FCDB/9518-33 Dated: 21/02/2026.

In view of Poor/Nil response for Tender ID No. 2026_IFC_304100_1, 2026_IFC_304100_2 advertised vide this office e-Bid Notice No. cited above, the date for bid submission end is hereby extended as per following schedule:

S.No.	Particulars	Previous Date	New Date
01.	Bid Submission end date	13-03-2026 upto 1800 Hours	23-03-2026 upto 1800 Hours
02.	Bid opening date	14-03-2026 at 1400 Hours	24-03-2026 at 1400 Hours

All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the original e-Bid.
I&FCDB/CS-33/10034-54
Dated: 14-03-2026
DIPK-11976-25
DT: 18/03/2026

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Irrigation & FC Division
Baramulla

India's Sustained Efforts Driving Sharp Decline In Child Mortality: UN Report

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- India has emerged as a key contributor to global progress in reducing child mortality, according to the latest United Nations report.

The UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UNIGME) Report 2025 highlighted India's sustained and large-scale efforts in improving child survival outcomes, particularly across neonatal and under-five mortality indicators.

Highlighting the report in an X post, Union Health Minister J P Nadda attributed the progress to India's focused, comprehensive approach to neonatal care.

Over the last two decades, India has played a pivotal role in reducing child mortality in the South Asia region, which

witnessed a 76 per cent decline in under-five deaths since 1990 and a 68 per cent drop since 2000.

The under-five mortality rate in the region fell significantly from 92 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to nearly 32 in 2024, reflecting sustained progress in child health outcomes.

This sharp reduction is largely driven by countries like India through targeted public health interventions, improved institutional delivery systems, and expanded immunisation coverage.

"India is among the countries demonstrating steady progress in reducing child mortality through sustained public health efforts. This reflects the strength of a coordinated, standards-driven approach led



by the Government of India in collaboration with states, with a clear focus on translating national priorities into improved outcomes for children," UNICEF India said in a press statement. Highlighting India's statistics in the report, Health Minister

Nadda said on X, "As per the UNIGME 2025 report, Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) has declined by nearly 70% -- from 57 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 17 in 2024 -- reflecting sustained improvements in maternal and newborn healthcare

services. Similarly, the Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) has registered an even steeper reduction of 79%, declining from 127 in 1990 to 27 in 2024."

Pointing to the key initiatives that led to this reduction, he said, "Key initiatives -- Special Newborn Care Units (SNCUs), Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK), and expanded immunisation combined with robust health systems have been driving this transformation."

"India's focused comprehensive approach on neonatal care has paved the way for eliminating preventable child deaths and securing a healthy future for our children," he added.

The UNIGME report underscored that a majority of child deaths are preventable

or treatable, and India's scaling up of interventions such as the Universal Immunisation Programme, facility-based newborn care, and Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illnesses has significantly improved survival rates.

India's improvements in neonatal care systems have been particularly impactful. Across South Asia, neonatal deaths declined by nearly 60 per cent since 2000 and mortality in children aged 1 to 59 months declined by over 75 per cent.

While South Asia still accounts for nearly 25 per cent of global under-five deaths, the region has made one of the fastest reductions globally, positioning India as a leader among high-burden countries.

India's success demonstrates

that targeted, large-scale, and equity-driven interventions can deliver rapid results, even in populous and diverse settings, health ministry sources said.

India is among the first few countries to set targets and release operational guidelines on Stillbirth Surveillance and response, the report said. This surveillance will strengthen systematic reporting to enable corrective actions in the public health system.

"India's experience shows that sustained leadership, strategic investments and strong collaboration with committed stakeholders have enabled a robust, scalable and effective implementation framework targeted towards the achievement of the SDGs," the report said.

Govt Directs Airlines Not to Charge Extra for 60% Seats

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- The government on Wednesday said airlines have been asked not to levy additional charges for 60 per cent of seats in a domestic flight from passengers.

Besides, airlines have been asked to ensure that those travelling on the same PNR are seated together in a flight as part of the civil aviation ministry's efforts to strengthen passenger facilitation.

Announcing the steps on Wednesday, the ministry said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has asked airlines to make sure that at least 60 per cent of seats on any flight are allocated free of charge to ensure fair access.

At present, 20 per cent of the seats can be booked free of charge while the rest is paid, according to an airline official.

"Passengers travelling on the same PNR are to be seated together, preferably in adjacent seats," the ministry said in a release.

These directions are applicable for domestic flights, an official said.

These steps come against



the backdrop of rising concerns that airlines are levying high charges for various services, including for choosing seats.

In a post on X on Wednesday, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram-mohan Naidu said important directions have been issued to further strengthen passenger facilitation measures.

"60 per cent seats free of charge, assured seating together for families, and clear, transparent norms for carriage of sports equipment, musical instruments & pets," he said.

According to him, there will be stronger enforcement and visibility of passenger rights, including during delays and cancellations.

Iran Women's Soccer Team Returns Home After Some Players Sought Asylum

Associated Press

DUBAI- Iran's national women's soccer team has returned to the Islamic Republic after several of the players sought asylum in Australia, Iranian media reported on Wednesday.

The outlets shared footage of the players entering Iran after landing in Turkey and taking a bus to the border. They were greeted by some officials at the border.

Two Iranian female players, Fatemeh Pasandideh and Atefeh Ramezani-sadeh, chose to remain in Australia and have been training with the Brisbane Roar club.

Others who initially sought asylum after the team was knocked out of the Women's Asian Cup later changed their minds and said they would return to Iran.

Iran's squad arrived in Australia for the tournament shortly before the Iran war began on February 28. The team initially gained global attention after some players stayed silent during Iran's national



anthem before their first game in the Asian Cup.

The silence was cast as an act of resistance or protest by some commentators and a show of mourning by others.

The players didn't publicly disclose their views or explain their actions and sang the anthem before their next two matches.

When the team was knocked out of the tournament and faced the prospect of returning to a country under bom-

bardment, calls grew for Australia's government to offer the women asylum. Iranian groups in Australia and US President Donald Trump were among those who expressed fears for the women's safety.

Iranian first Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref last week dismissed suggestions the women would be unsafe if they returned home, saying the country "welcomes its children with open arms and the government guarantees their security".

Babar, Fakhar Suspected To Be Unfit During T20 World Cup Selection

Press Trust Of India

KARACHI- The medical panel of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) suspects that senior players, Babar Azam and Fakhar Zaman, might not have been 100 percent fit when they were picked in the T20 World Cup squad.

The same concerns were raised by senior selector, Aaqib Javed, at a media conference last week and he said the board would investigate the matter.

A source close to the board said that Dr Javed Mughal, a UK-based consultant on sports physiotherapy and medicine, who joined the PCB medical panel as director of sports exercise and medicine in January, has expressed his concerns after examining Babar and Fakhar after the World Cup.

The matter came to light when Babar refused to play in the National T20 Championship after returning from the World Cup, citing hamstring irritation, while Fakhar dealt with similar issues.

"When Babar was ex-



amined his injury turned out to be more serious than initially diagnosed while Fakhar also has been struggling with the same problem for months now," the source said.

He said the national selection committee made it clear to the medical panel that they picked Babar and Fakhar in the World Cup squad after getting clearance from the Pakistan team physiotherapist, Cliffe Deacon.

Allegations suggest that Deacon has previously allowed players with niggling injuries to play because of his close relationship with them.

Babar is now rehabilitating at the national cricket academy under the supervision of the medi-

cal panel and is expected to be cleared to play in the Pakistan Super League in which he will captain Pehsawar Zalmi. The PSL starts from March 26.

Fakhar recently appeared in a National T20 Cup match, and on Tuesday posted on social media that while he was not fully fit for the 50-over series in Bangladesh, he has now recovered to play in the T20 event.

Both players were sidelined for the Bangladesh tour, in which Pakistan lost the series 1-2, but now sources close to the selectors have confirmed that, even before the injury issues came out, they had decided to drop Babar because of poor form in the World Cup.

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