

## Assembly Elections

# WB Records 92% Turnout; TN 84%



### Press Trust Of India

Chennai: West Bengal registered a record voter turnout of nearly 92 per cent in the first phase of assembly polls on Thursday amid sporadic incidents of violence, while Tamil Nadu recorded an unprecedented voting of over 84 per cent as the BJP pushed to unseat Mamata Banerjee in Bengal and expand in the South.

In the first phase, 152 constituencies in West Bengal went to polls, while voting for the 234-member Tamil Nadu assembly was held in one go. The elections are taking place against the backdrop of a massive political row over the SIR of the electoral rolls, a major

flashpoint between the BJP and opposition parties, including the Trinamool Congress (TMC).

In West Bengal, the BJP is eyeing wresting power from the Banerjee-led TMC, which seeks a fourth straight term in a state the saffron party has never governed, and in Tamil Nadu, key contenders are the ruling DMK and main opposition AIADMK, while actor-politician Vijay-led TVK and Tamil nationalist Seeman-led NTK are putting up a determined fight.

Terming the massive voter turnout in Bengal "an overwhelming mandate for change", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that May 4, when votes will be counted, would mark the **| More on P6**

**THE FULL CREDIT TO SIR. HATS OFF TO THE ELECTION COMMISSION.** We have seen it in Bihar, Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and now Pondicherry and now in Tamil Nadu. So, full credit to them."

## War's Ledger

# Buried In Absence: The Child Who Could Not Be Found

### KO Web Desk

Srinagar- War is often counted in numbers—casualties, strikes, targets—but its truest measure lies in what cannot be counted: the absence that lingers, the lives that vanish without trace, the grief that finds no closure.

For the parents of seven-year-old Makaan Nasiri, that absence is absolute.

They are the only family among the dead of the Shajareh Tayyebah (The Pure Tree) elementary school in Minab, southern Iran, who have been unable to bury their child. When the school was struck on February 28—the first day of attacks across



Iran by the United States and Israel—156 people were killed, most of them children. Every victim was accounted for. Except one.

Makaan. Washington has remained silent on the strike, but evidence indicates that US Tomahawk missiles hit the

school. Shortly after 11am that Saturday morning, Asieh Rahinejad received a call from a teacher urging her to pick up her son immediately. Unaware that war had already begun with bombings in Tehran and the killing of senior Iranian figures, she called the school bus driver to bring Makaan home.

Minutes later, a second missile struck.

There was no time left for rescue. The force of the blasts tore through classrooms and lives alike. According to Minab's general prosecutor Ebrahim Taheri, 120 students were killed—73 boys and 47 girls—along with **| More on P6**

## Civil Defence Mock Drills Held Across J&K

### Observer News Service

Srinagar- Large-scale civil defence mock drills were conducted across multiple districts of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday to strengthen disaster preparedness, improve inter-agency coordination, and enhance emergency response systems, officials said.

In Kishtwar, a major drill saw participation from police, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Red Cross, local NGOs, NCC cadets, CRPF and CISF, along with civil administration officials. The exercise focused on testing rescue operations, evacuation procedures, response time and public safety protocols.

Officials said the aim was to streamline coordination among departments and ensure a swift and effective response during emergencies. They added that such **| More on P6**

## From Sniffer Dogs To Sermons: J&K's War On Drugs Intensifies

### Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir's anti-drug campaign is gaining momentum on multiple fronts, with enforcement agencies tightening surveillance on the ground and religious institutions stepping in to amplify awareness at the community level.

In south Kashmir's Shopian district, police have deployed a specialised canine unit to strengthen action against drug trafficking. The move, carried out in coordination with the Central Reserve Police Force's 14th Battalion, is part of the ongoing Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan aimed at curbing the

narcotics trade. Officials said trained sniffer dogs have been stationed at multiple checkpoints as part of a focused enforcement drive. The canine unit is being used to detect concealed narcotics, often hidden in vehicles and cargo, enabling timely seizures and arrests. **| More on P6**

### Houses Of Drug Peddlers Demolished In Jammu

The administration on Thursday demolished three houses belonging to alleged drug peddlers here, officials said. Amid heavy deployment of police and CRPF **| More on P6**

## Education Beyond Marks Is Need Of The Hour: LG

### Says Classrooms Must Adapt To A Changing World

### Observer News Service

Jammu: Stressing the need to move beyond marks-centric learning, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday inaugurated the new school building of Swami Pranavanand Vidyamandir in Panjgrain, Nagrota, calling for a shift towards



holistic, skill-based education aligned with global changes. The school, run by Bharat Sevashram Sangha, has been imparting **| More on P6**

## A New Chapter of Healthcare Begins in Jammu and Kashmir



### Inauguration of 30-bedded ESIC Hospital (Expandable upto 100 Beds) Ompora, District Budgam, J&K

By

**Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya**  
Minister of Labour & Employment and  
Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India

Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2026 | 10:30 AM  
Ompora, Budgam, Jammu & Kashmir



"Our government is committed to the development of a generous and comprehensive social security mechanism for all workers."

**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister

### SALIENT FEATURES

- A hospital equipped with ultra-modern medical facilities
- Benefitting 50,000 workers and their families in Ompora and adjoining areas
- Offering 3 Modular Operation Theatres, 1 Emergency Operation Theatre, OPD, Emergency, General Medicine, Surgery, Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Orthopaedics, Eye Care, Dental Care, Pharmacy, and Diagnostic Services
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## Rescue Teams Intensify Hunt for Boy Who Jumped into Jhelum

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Rescue teams on Thursday continued an extensive search operation in the river Jhelum to trace a boy who jumped into the water from Budshah Bridge in Srinagar's Lal Chowk area late Wednesday evening, officials said.

The unidentified boy had jumped into the river from Budshah Bridge on Wednesday, prompting an immediate response from police, the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and other teams.

Soon after the incident, rescue teams rushed to the spot and launched a search operation in the river. However, despite efforts until late evening, the boy could not be traced.

ASI SDRF Jhelum Srinagar, Mohammad Ashraf, told KNO that the search operation was resumed early Thursday morning by the Quick Response Team (QRT) Jhelum unit.

"Teams carried out extensive searches throughout the day at multiple locations in the river stretch. However, due to dim light and low visibility, the operation has been suspended for the evening and will resume at first light tomorrow," the ASI said.

The CCTV footage of the incident also surfaced, purportedly showing the boy climbing the railing of Budshah Bridge before jumping into the river Jhelum. The video has since circulated widely on social media.

Officials said specialised teams used boats and other rescue equipment during the operation, while the area around the bridge remained under observation. Police have taken cognizance of the incident and started an investigation to ascertain the identity of the boy and the circumstances leading to the incident.

The search operation is expected to continue on Friday morning with the first light of day.



## Civic Deficiencies Flagged at Goni Khan Market; SSCL CEO Orders Quick Action

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In a continued effort to strengthen field-level monitoring and ensure efficient civic service delivery, Faz Lul Haseeb, Chief Executive Officer, Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL), conducted an on-site inspection of Goni Khan Market, one of the city's prominent and busiest commercial centres.

During the visit, the CEO interacted with traders, shopkeepers, and local stakeholders to assess the condition of civic infrastructure and obtain first-hand feedback on issues affecting the day-to-day functioning of the market. Various concerns relating to sanitation, drainage management, and public utility services were brought to his notice during the interaction.

Taking immediate cognizance of the issues raised, the CEO issued on-the-spot directions to the concerned wings for their prompt redressal. The Drainage Wing was instructed to clear existing bottlenecks and ensure the proper functioning and regular maintenance of the drainage network in and around Goni Khan Market to prevent inconvenience to traders, commuters, and pedestrians.

The inspection also included a review of the proposed connection of a feeder pillar with the main power cabling. It was informed that the work had faced interruptions due to objections raised by the Goni Khan Market Co-ordination Committee. Taking note of the matter, the CEO directed the Chief Engineer, SSCL, to engage with the concerned stakeholders and the committee

to resolve the issue amicably and ensure that the feeder pillar is connected with the main power cabling at the earliest, facilitating the smooth functioning of the electrical infrastructure.

The visit underscores the administration's continued emphasis on proactive field engagement, coordinated departmental action, and time-bound grievance redressal aimed at strengthening civic amenities and enhancing the overall urban experience in Srinagar.

The CEO was accompanied by the Chief Engineer, SSCL; Chief Sanitation Officer, Srinagar Municipal Corporation; Executive Engineer (MCD Wing); AEE Mechanical (Left Sub-Division); Executive Engineer (CDC); along with other senior officials from SSCL and SMC.

## KU Marks World Book & Copyright Day



Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Allama Iqbal Library (AIL), University of Kashmir (KU), organised an event to celebrate World Book and Copyright Day at the Main Campus on Thursday.

Held on the theme 'The power of reading: Enriching minds, elevating institutions and empowering societies,' the event focused on encouraging reading habits and strengthening engagement with library resources among students and scholars. It also aimed at deliberating on the ethical use of artificial intelligence and concerns related to plagiarism in the evolving academic landscape.

On the occasion, the University launched the AIL Chatbot, a digital assistant designed to support users with queries related to library services, availability of resources, and facilities.

The chatbot also offers chat and call features to improve access and user support. A live demonstration of the tool was conducted during the event.

Vice-Chancellor, KU, Prof. Nilofer Khan, in her address, said, "Reading remains central to academic life, even as digital tools reshape how knowledge is accessed. Initiatives like these help strengthen both traditional and technology-driven learning practices."

She further added that the integration of digital solutions such as the chatbot can enhance user experience and make library services more accessible and efficient.

Dean Academic Affairs, KU, Prof. Shariefuddin Pirzada, in his remarks, emphasised the continued relevance of libraries as academic spaces and noted the importance of adapting to changing learning environments.

## Altaf Bukhari Welcomes New Entrants into Party Fold

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Apni Party President Altaf Bukhari on Thursday extended a warm welcome to prominent political activists and workers from South Kashmir's Tral and North Kashmir's Pattan who joined the party during an event held at the party headquarters in Srinagar.

According to a press release, Junaid Mir and Abdul Rehman Gojer, the veteran political activists from Tral in Pulwama joined the Apni Party along with their associates in the presence of the party president.

On a separate occasion, Imran Majeed, Dawood Ahmed, Bilal Bashir, Mukhtar Ahmad Wani, Zafar Ahmed Wani, and several other prominent political and social workers from North Kashmir's Pattan also joined the party.

## DC Assesses Progress of Major Developmental Projects

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In order to review the status of proposed major developmental projects and ongoing infrastructure works in the district, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo chaired a comprehensive meeting of senior Officers here at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office complex.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiaz ul Aziz, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Chief Engineer SSCI, Abdul Qayoom Kirmani, Superintending Engineer R&B, Tatheer Manzoor, Joint Commissioner, SMC, Suhail ul Islam, Collector Land Acquisition R&B, Syed Farooq, SDM West, Irfan Bahadur, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar, Executive Engineers of R&B, PHE, KPDC, City Drainage, UEED & SMC Tehsildars South, Tehsildar Shalteng and other Officers.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner undertook a comprehensive assessment of the progress in planning and execution of utility shifting for both proposed and ongoing works, emphasizing the need to further expedite the process to accelerate overall project execution.

The DC was given project wise appraisal regarding the current status of estimate

preparations and utility shifting for key development projects and ongoing infrastructure works including 4L Flyover from Parimpora to Dalgate Junction, Parimpora-Shalteng Flyover, Vehicle Under Pass (VUP) at Moominabad, Panthachowk flyover, FOB at Children's Hospital Bemina, expansion of Boulevard road and Vehicle Under Pass (VUP) at Nowgam Railway Crossing.

The DC was apprised that the encouraging progress has been achieved in the preparation of estimates of proposed major infrastructural projects with several key projects at advanced stages of finalization.

On the occasion, the DC emphasized the importance of inter-departmental coordination in timely addressing issues related to land acquisition, clearances and utility relocation. He stressed the need to work diligently on designs, technical feasibility and cost estimates to ensure that DPRs are robust, accurate and ready for timely submission and approval.

The DC directed Officers and Engineers to work with due diligence and ensure that all projects incorporate land acquisition costs in their DPRs for seamless and uninterrupted execution of major infrastructure development projects across the district within set timelines.

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PAMPOR: 01933-294132  
PATTAN: 01954-293507  
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HIGHWAY STATUS  
Sgr-Jammu highway - ( Open )  
Mughal Road - ( Open )  
Srinagar- Leh- ( Open )

PRAYERS	
FAJR	4: 21
ZUHR	12:29
ASR	5: 14
Magrib	7:11
ISHA	8: 39

HIJRI CALENDAR  
06 Zil-Qadah  
1447

### This Day In History

- 1479 BC - Thutmose III ascends to the throne of Egypt, although power effectively shifts to Hatshepsut (according to the Low Chronology of the 18th Dynasty)
- 1066 - Halley's Comet sparks English monk to predict country will be destroyed
- 1185 - Battle at Danoura: Yoshitsune Minamoto's fleet beats the Taira during Japan's Genpei War
- 1793 - French revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat is acquitted by the Revolutionary Tribunal of charges brought by the Girondin in Paris
- 1800 - US Library of Congress establishes with \$5,000 allocation

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is to inform General Public through the medium of this notice that I Gulafroz Maqbool intend to change my name in Existing Aadhar card. The name in Aadhar is mentioned as Shereen Abid W/o: Abid Hussain Khuroo. However same needs to be changed to Gulafroz Maqbool. W/o Abid Hussain Khuroo Residence Address: House No. 251, Housing Colony Ompora, Budgam -Kashmir -191111. Anyone having any objection should approach Concerned Authority within 07 days from the publication of this Notice. No objection shall be entertained after the lapse of 07 days from the publication of this notice. iko

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
I, Gh. Mohi-ud-Din Bhat S/o Ab Rahman Bhat R/o Samboora, Tehsil Pampore, District Pulwama, hereby inform the general public that I am serving in the Police Department since the year 1998. I was appointed as Constable and Presently, performing my duties as Head Constable. My father's name has been wrongly recorded as "Ab Rehman" in my service records instead of the correct name "Ab Rahman." Hence, the correct name of my father is Ab Rahman. Now I have applied for the correction of the same. If any person has any objection in this regard, he/she may file them in the concerned office within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. Gh. Mohi-ud-Din Bhat R/o Samboora, Pampore District Pulwama x

**OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS ZAINGER BOMAI**  
Subject: Issuance of registration order in respect of delayed Birth & Death Public Notice  
This office has received a written application from Atiqa Begum S/o: Gh Rasik Lone R/o: Logripora, Tehsil Zainger for issuance of Birth & Death certificate in favour of Atiqa Begum born on 22-04-1956 and as per document evidence produced by the applicant. In this regard, if anyone has any objection, he/she may file the same before the undersigned within 07 days. After that, no objection whatsoever will be entertained by this office. fko Tehsildar Executive Magistrate Bomai

Government of Jammu & Kashmir  
**Office of the Block Medical Officer, Sallar (Medical Director SANJY-2026, Pahalgam Axis)**  
No. MD-Yatra/2026/80-83 Date:23/04/2026

Subject: Inviting tenders for various services for Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2026 (Pahalgam Side)

**NOTICE INVITING TENDERS**

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor, Jammu & Kashmir, tenders are hereby invited from eligible and interested bidders for the following services in connection with Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2026 (Pahalgam Side):

- Tender ID: 2026\_HME\_308448\_1  
NIT No.: MD-Yatra/2026/75-79- Tender for **The Supply of Food items** during The Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2026 (Pahalgam Side)

All interested bidders are invited to participate in the tendering process and submit their bids online well before the cut-off time. The detailed terms and conditions, scope of work, and other relevant information are available on the official e-tendering portal (<https://ktenders.gov.in>)

**Tender Schedule:**

- Tender Starting Date: 23/04/2026 at 09:00 AM
- Tender Closing Date: 04/05/2026 at 11:00 AM
- Tender Opening Date: 04/05/2026 at 11:30 AM

Sd/-  
Block Medical Officer,  
Sallar  
Medical Director SANJY-2026  
Pahalgam Axis

DIPK-692/26  
dated: 23-04-2026

Government of Jammu and Kashmir  
**School Education Department Civil Secretariat, J&K.**

Subject: Verification of Character & Antecedents of the applicant who has applied for Compassionate Appointment case under SRO-43 of 1994 read with SRO-120 of 2018 dated 05.03.2018.

Reference: O.M No. GAD-SRO/30/2026-09-GAD (7730976) Dated: 01.04.2026 from the General Administration Department.

**NOTICE**

The applicant namely Mr. Amish Ashrif S/o Late Mohd Ashrif Zarger, (Ex-Teacher) R/o Halore, Tehsil Bhaleesa, District Doda is hereby informed to submit his email ID and contact details in the office of Commissioner/Secretary to the Government, School Education Department Civil Secretariat Jammu in person, within a period of 21 days positively, for uploading/registering the same on the employees verification system (EVS), for obtaining the Character and Antecedents report from the Criminal Investigation Department, failing which he shall forfeit his right for appointment under Compassionate Appointment rules notified vide SRO-43 of 1994.

(Thnnaji Bhat)  
Under Secretary to the Government School Education Department

No. Edu-Ptsh/81/2021-01 (70339)  
DIPK-697/26  
Dated: 23.04.2026

**ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**  
AWANTIPORA, KASHMIR.  
Tel: 01933-247954/247955. Website: www.iust.ac.in

**ADVERTISEMENT NOTICE No: 02 of 2026**  
Dated: 22-04-2026

Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Kashmir invites online applications from the eligible candidates for the post of **Professor in the Department of Architecture.**

**NOTE:**

- Date of availability of online application forms: **24-04-2026.**
- Last date of submission of online application forms: **18-05-2026 (4:30 PM).**
- Last date of submission of hardcopies of the application forms: **25-05-2026 (5:00 PM).**

The detailed advertisement notice is available on the University website [www.iust.ac.in](http://www.iust.ac.in).

Sd/-  
Registrar

No: IUST/Reg/Adm/ADV/26/154  
Dated: 22-04-2026

**DIPK-NB-238/26 dated: 23-04-2026**

## KASHMIR OBSERVER®

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of  
Kashmir Observer LLP  
Printed at: K.T Press Pvt. Ltd 120-Electronic Complex,  
Industrial Estate, Rangreth-Budgam  
Published from: 5-Boulevard Srinagar J&K  
Editor-in-Chief: Sajjad Haider  
Managing Editor: Bilal Handoo  
News Editor: Farzana Nisar  
Online Editor: Syed Hamid  
Head Layout & Design: Muntazir Yaseen,  
Digital Media Head: Amir Ali Shah  
Distribution & Advertising: Firdous Ahmad  
RNI Registration No: 69503/98  
Postal Registration No-L/159/KO/SK/2014-16  
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# Pahalgam and the Fear Economy

One year after the Baisaran bloodbath, the valley continues to battle the economic and psychological scars left behind by recurring violence.



Sheikh Khalid Jahangir



**“To make lasting change, we need a holistic approach that balances enforcement with empowerment. But in the middle of all these problems, it’s important not to forget how strong the people of Pahalgam are.”**

### KO VIEW

## Kashmir’s Job Delusion

A lab technician applying for a sweeper’s post has stirred strong reactions in Kashmir. Political leaders rushed to present the case as proof of rising unemployment and deep public despair. The story touched a nerve because it exposed a larger crisis that society has refused to confront with honesty. Kashmir’s educated youth continue to see government employment as the only respectable path in life, even as the economy moves in a very different direction.

That mindset now stands at the center of the problem. Colleges, coaching centers, universities, and private institutions continue to produce thousands of graduates every year. Government departments cannot absorb such enormous numbers. Recruitment exams arrive late, remain tied up in delays, or disappear into long stretches of uncertainty. Every family knows this reality, though many still encourage their children to spend years chasing the same shrinking opportunity.

A government job still enjoys enormous social value in Kashmir. Marriage prospects improve with it. Family status rises with it. Parents see it as proof that their sacrifices have paid off. Young people grow up believing that success begins and ends with a government post. That belief has boxed an entire generation into one narrow definition of ambition.

The world outside Kashmir has already moved ahead. Technology companies now place greater value on skills than on degrees alone. Artificial intelligence, automation, digital platforms, and the influence economy have opened avenues that barely existed a decade ago. Young people build careers through content creation, coding, digital marketing, design, online education, remote consulting, and small entrepreneurial ventures. Short-term certifications and nano degrees increasingly matter more than long academic timelines.

Kashmir’s education system still trains students for an economy that no longer exists.

Political leaders also bear responsibility here. Public speeches often highlight despair because despair produces quick emotional reactions. Stories of educated youth seeking low-rank government jobs dominate headlines and social media discussions. Such narratives deepen hopelessness among young people who already struggle with uncertainty. Kashmir’s youth deserve a larger conversation about innovation, enterprise, technology, tourism, crafts, digital business, and independent work.

A society grows when contribution becomes more valuable than job titles.

Kashmir already has talented young people building startups, online businesses, creative platforms, and independent careers. Those stories deserve greater attention because they offer direction and confidence. Public thinking must evolve alongside economic reality. Families, schools, universities, religious leaders, and policymakers all have a role in changing this culture of dependency.

The real challenge before Kashmir is not unemployment alone. The deeper challenge lies in imagination.

A generation trained to believe that opportunity lives only inside government offices will continue to feel trapped, regardless of how much education it receives.

Kashmir’s future demands a broader vision of success.

Pahalgam has long been one of India’s most popular tourist spots. It is surrounded by the beautiful Himalayas, and it is a place where nature shows itself in its most pure form.

The Lidder River flows through the valley with a soothing murmur, and the air is still and calm, inviting you to think.

Verdant meadows roll on forever beneath snow-capped peaks. People have been coming here for generations to find peace, adventure, and a short break from the craziness of everyday life.

But behind this calm surface is a story that is much more complicated and painful.

The peaceful beauty of Pahalgam has been marred by cross-border sponsorship of violence that has left deep and lasting scars over the years. What should have been a safe place has, at times, become a place of tragedy, where moments of happiness have quickly turned into fear and sadness.

Like much of Kashmir’s history, Pahalgam has a pattern of unrest that keeps happening. Because the area’s security situation is so unstable, violent events are not just one-time events but part of a worrying cycle.

Time and again, attacks have broken the fragile peace, making it hard to know how well current security systems work. These events don’t just make the news, they change lives, alter how people think, and leave behind a feeling of vulnerability that is hard to shake.

The effects of this kind of violence go far beyond the deaths that happen right away. Every time something bad happens, tourism, which is the main source of income for Pahalgam, suffers a lot.

The town used to be full of tourists from all over the country and beyond, but now it often has to deal with sudden drops in foot traffic. Half-empty hotels, struggling local businesses, and jobs that depend on seasonal tourism are all in danger. The ripple effect is huge. It affects every home that relies on a steady stream of visitors.

People who travel to Pahalgam often worry about it, which makes it less appealing. People see the landscapes that promise peace through a lens of caution. Families change their plans, solo travellers think twice, and the region’s image around the world suffers.

This loss of trust may be one of the longest-lasting effects of repeated attacks because it changes how people see things in ways that are hard to undo.

The deadly attack that happened last year was a painful and clear reminder of this ongoing reality. Beyond a violent act, it was part of a larger pattern that still haunts the area.

The meadow massacre rattled the whole country and brought back discussions about safety, government, and the long-term stability of Kashmir. It also made a hard truth clear: the threat hasn’t been completely neutralized, even after years of work.

This makes the bigger problem of Kashmir’s security situation very clear. The fact that these things keep happening shows that the steps that have been taken so far, while important, may not be enough to deal with the problem’s complexity.

Geopolitical tensions, local grievances, and the difficult terrain that often makes it harder to enforce

the law all affect the region’s security dynamics. In this kind of situation, keeping the peace requires more than just sending in troops. It essentially requires a full, flexible plan.

The persistence of such attacks points to gaps that continue to be exploited. This cycle needs to be stopped. The security apparatus must constantly change and improve, taking proactive steps instead of waiting for problems to happen.

To stop threats before they happen, we need to improve intelligence gathering, make it easier for agencies to work together, and make better use of technology. Security cannot exist without the people it wants to protect. It’s very important to build trust between the government and the people who live there.

Getting people involved in the community, making them aware of issues, and getting them to participate can all help find risks and build a sense of shared responsibility. People are more likely to help keep the peace when they feel safe and included.

It is just as important to deal with the bigger problems that cause instability. For peace to last, we need more than just security measures. We also need to help the economy grow, give young people more chances, and fight against stories that keep violence going.

To make lasting change, we need a holistic approach that balances enforcement with empowerment. But in the middle of all these problems, it’s important not to forget how strong the people of Pahalgam are.

The people in the area have shown time and again that they can survive and rebuild. Even though they are going through tough times and loss, they still welcome guests with warmth and kindness. Their spirit is still strong, and their connection to their land is still strong. They are a true representation of Pahalgam in many ways.

Every event serves as a reminder of how much work is still to be done. It requires self-reflection, responsibility, and a renewed commitment to making sure that these things don’t happen again. There is no doubt that the road ahead will be hard, but there is still hope.

To remember the tragedy at Pahalgam, we need to talk about more than just security. We need to talk about the deeper things that keep cycles of violence going. Local recruitment and radicalization continue

to fuel militancy, often propelled by a combination of alienation, misinformation, and a scarcity of viable opportunities. To fight this, we need more than just force. We need to actively challenge the stories that make violence seem okay or even romantic, and we need to offer young people believable alternatives.

It is important to get people involved in meaningful ways through education, skill-building, and job opportunities. This is especially true for strengthening sectors like tourism that have long been the region’s economic backbone.

The Indian government must also take an active role in restoring confidence by sending clear, positive messages that make people want to come back, which will help revive jobs linked to this industry.

Each attack not only kills people, but it also hurts weak local economies, making insecurity a long-term economic crisis for communities that rely on tourism.

To end this cycle, we need a big change in strategy. This change needs to include coordinated governance, ongoing community involvement, and strong political will to ensure both peace and prosperity.

In the end, the story of Pahalgam is not just about its problems. It’s a story of strength, of a place that keeps inspiring people even when things are tough.

The rivers still flow in the same calm way, the meadows still bloom with the same serene beauty, and the people still carry on a legacy of strength and warmth.

It is now up to everyone involved, including governments, communities, and the country as a whole, to make sure that this story goes in a new direction. One where security is not reactive but proactive, where peace is not weak but lasting, and where the name Pahalgam only brings to mind the beauty and peace it has always promised.

Only then can this valley truly reclaim its identity, as a symbol of hope, stability, and the enduring spirit of Kashmir.

*The author is a Peace & Policy Scholar, widely published author, and Director & Visiting Fellow at ICPS, with International engagements. He can be reached at khalidpress@gmail.com.*



Muhammad Arbaaz Niazi

## Kashmir's Lakes Are Vanishing

A government audit found 315 lakes gone and hundreds more shrinking. The valley knows what it is losing. Its institutions look elsewhere.

**“The cost of inaction has grown concrete and visible. It shows up in shrinking shorelines, polluted waters, fewer birds arriving each winter. It arrives through increasing unpredictability of floods and droughts. It lives in the knowledge that something fundamental is being lost.”**

Kashmir has always treated water as more than a resource. It lives inside poetry and prayer. Lakes breathe with the seasons. Wetlands host birds on journeys older than borders. To grow up in the valley means growing up beside water.

Today that water retreats. A lake shrinks at the edges, a marsh turns to dry ground, channels clog, shorelines advance where water once stood. The disappearance moves slowly enough to escape outrage until one day the absence becomes obvious to everyone.

This goes beyond nostalgia. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India laid bare the scale of this crisis in its latest report on lake conservation in Jammu and Kashmir. Out of 697 identified lakes, 518, nearly three in four, have disappeared or shrunk dramatically. Three hundred fifteen lakes, 45 percent of the total, have vanished entirely, erasing more than 1,537 hectares of water spread.

These numbers represent erased geographies. Behind each vanished lake sits a story of neglect, encroachment, deferred decisions, and diluted responsibilities. Losses cut through administrative boundaries.

Lakes under the Forest Department, the Revenue Department, and the Agriculture Department all proved equally vulnerable. The failure belongs to a system instead of a single institution alone.

Statistics give clarity, but they capture only part of what disappears.

Dal Lake at dawn still offers beauty, but look closer and the cracks appear. Its open water has shrunk, its depth reduced, its clarity clouded. Sewage and algae have replaced thriving fish populations. Encroachments creep in persistently.

As Srinagar’s identity, Dal is losing ground inch by inch, season by season.

Travel beyond the city to Hokersar Wetland. Migratory birds still come, but they find diminished water waiting. Encroachment and altered channels have reduced its reach. Adaptation has limits. Further shrinkage destroys its value as a refuge.

Further north, Wular Lake holds a different kind of weight. It used to be vast, absorbing water powerfully when the valley flooded. Today silt gathers where water once stretched deep. Willow plantations stand where open water once absorbed excess flow. Encroachments nibble at its boundaries. The lake remains diminished, weaker at performing the role that

once made it indispensable. When Wular shrinks, the valley grows more vulnerable. The response remains fragmented, and responsibility stays divided. The region lacks a dedicated Wetland Act to provide a unified legal shield. Departments function under archaic land-use laws that often prioritize development over ecology. One agency handles a lake, another a wetland, a third manages land records with maps outdated after decades. Within this maze, ac-

countability grows diffuse and elusive. Neglect becomes a predictable outcome within such a system. Manasbal Lake remains stunning, but beneath the surface pressures mount: pollution, activity that escapes oversight, scant monitoring.

South of the Pir Panjal, the twin lakes of Surinsar-Mansar tell a similar story. They are calmer, less crowded, equally vulnerable. Protection exists, but it remains partial and inconsistent, lacking the force of a long-term vision.

What binds all these places together goes beyond their decline. The drama stays hidden. The collapse arrives slowly, each moment passing while attention stays elsewhere.

A slow erosion of water, ecological balance, and institutional responsibility takes hold. Budgets arrive modestly, projects lack follow-through, surveys remain outdated, data partial.

The region still lacks a comprehensive, updated inventory of its lakes. You protect only what you measure fully.

Something more fundamental hangs in the balance: a shift in how people see these lakes. Officials treat them as scenic assets and tourist attractions. But they amount to more than passive landscapes. They are living systems, regulating water, recharging groundwater, supporting biodiversity, and stabilizing climate.

When a lake disappears, the loss extends beyond its boundaries. It ripples outward into agriculture, livelihoods, weather patterns, and the very texture of life.

Throughout the valley, older generations remember lakes that exist only in memory. These memories remain absent from official reports, but they are as real as any statistic. The deeper tragedy goes beyond the disappearance itself. The loss has become normal.

Reversing this trajectory will demand a shift in mindset, a recognition that lakes are essential, primary, indispensable. A unified framework must govern all water bodies, cutting through departmental boundaries.

Updated mapping must establish a clear baseline. Encroachments must be addressed through sustained effort. Communities must serve as central stakeholders and primary partners. Above all, political will must endure.

The cost of inaction has grown concrete and visible. It shows up in shrinking shorelines, polluted waters, fewer birds arriving each winter. It arrives through increasing unpredictability of floods and droughts. It lives in the knowledge that something fundamental is being lost.

Water in Kashmir has always served as a mirror. It reflects the sky, the condition of the land, and the choices of its people.

Today that mirror fades. The question it leaves behind is simple: After the water leaves, what remains?

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# The Collaborator Comes Alive

Line of Control (previously The Collaborator) turns Kashmir's vanished sons into flesh-and-blood teenagers again, and in doing so delivers one of the year's most unsettling war films.



Haziqah Showkat

War films usually announce themselves with explosions. "Line of Control" opens with flowers.

A teenage boy stands in a valley ringed by mountains and wild blooms. Bodies lie scattered around him. Young men. Boys, really. Blood darkens the grass. An Indian Army captain orders him to walk among the dead and collect their identity cards.

That image lands like a punch because director Travis Hodgkins understands a brutal truth about Kashmir: beauty and horror occupy the same frame.

Production recently wrapped on "Line of Control" adapted from The Collaborator, the acclaimed 2011 novel by Mirza Waheed. The book earned praise from publications including The Telegraph and The Guardian, and its arrival on screen holds unusual impact in 2026.

Global audiences have spent years consuming simplified stories about Kashmir through nationalist talking points, television debates, and action thrillers built around patriotic spectacle. "Line of Control" moves in the opposite direction. It strips away slogans and asks a harder question: what happens to ordinary boys trapped between guns, borders, and frightened fathers?

That question gives the film its pulse.

Set during the insurgency of the 1990s along the Line of Control dividing Kashmir into two parts, the story follows a 17-year-old known only as "the Boy." His friends disappear one by one, crossing the border to join armed ranks.

His village empties of young men, army patrols tighten their grip, and fear enters homes like winter air. Then comes Captain Kadian.



## LINE OF CONTROL

BASED ON THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED NOVEL "THE COLLABORATOR"

Played with unnerving restraint by Rudi Dharmalingam, Kadian recruits the Boy for a grotesque task: retrieve IDs and weapons from insurgents killed in the valley below. The Boy accepts because survival demands compromise. His father understands the bargain immediately. A son who obeys may live another day.

Many war films chase moral clarity. "Line of Control" chases moral exhaustion.

Hodgkins, making his feature directing debut, approaches the material with surprising confidence. Several literary adaptations drown inside reverence for the source text. This film breathes on its own. Scenes move with the slow dread of a thriller. Every trip into the valley feels like a descent into a mass grave that keeps expanding.

Newcomer Nikhil Singh Rai gives the film its center of gravity. His performance avoids theatrical suffering. Pain emerges through pauses, glances, unfinished sentences. Rai understands that teenagers living through conflict rarely speak in grand speeches. They crack jokes,



**"LINE OF CONTROL" ARRIVES AT A MOMENT WHEN GLOBAL CINEMA DESPERATELY NEEDS MORAL**

**SERIOUSNESS AGAIN.** Streaming platforms overflow with algorithm-friendly violence stripped of consequence. Hodgkins offers consequence in every frame. Death here leaves stains on memory, language, and friendship.

fall in love, skip school, and stare too long at roads where friends vanished last week.

One early sequence captures that beautifully. The Boy sneaks away to meet a girl from school. Notes pass between them with the word "butterflies" scribbled inside. Hands brush lightly in a field. Poetry fills the silence. A few minutes later, violence crashes back into the sto-

ry. Hodgkins uses those moments carefully. Romance never arrives as escapism. It comes as evidence of stolen youth.

The film's greatest achievement lies in its refusal to flatten anyone into a symbol.

Captain Kadian drinks with the Boy and speaks about literature, family photographs, and daughters waiting back home. "I want to go

home," he admits during one scene.

That line changes the temperature of the film. Viewers receive neither absolution nor condemnation. Human complexity enters the room instead.

Several films about Kashmir lean heavily on geopolitics. "Line of Control" stays intimate. Families searching for sons matter more here than diplomatic history. Villages hollowed out by disappearances matter more than speeches about sovereignty. That focus gives the story unusual force.

Johan Holmqvist's cinematography deserves special mention. His camera treats Kashmir neither as tourist brochure nor battlefield cliché.

Landscape appears bruised by memory, snow carries menace, and fields full of flowers resemble burial grounds waiting for names.

A few familiar cinematic habits still creep in. Certain costumes and visual details fall into old stereotypes about Kashmiri identity, creating brief moments that feel imported from another generation of filmmaking.

Those scenes stand out precisely because the rest of the film works so hard toward specificity.

The emotional climax comes in devastating fashion. The Boy lies among corpses and speaks softly to one of the dead. Seventeen flowers bloom between the body's feet. He talks as though conversation itself might restore humanity to boys reduced to body counts and intelligence reports.

That scene explains why "Line of Control" matters now.

Contemporary cinema often treats conflict through strategic maps and ideological binaries. Hodgkins and Waheed focus on missing sons, classmates, and futures.

Every corpse in that valley once attended school, flirted awkwardly, argued with parents, dreamed about escape.

Audience reactions from recent festival screenings suggest the film has struck a nerve. Viewers have praised its emotional precision and refusal to treat Kashmir as abstraction. Several compared its power to a history lesson delivered through grief rather than exposition.

Those responses make sense because the film understands something many political dramas miss: statistics rarely move people, while one frightened teenager can break your heart completely.

"Line of Control" arrives at a moment when global cinema desperately needs moral seriousness again. Streaming platforms overflow with algorithm-friendly violence stripped of consequence. Hodgkins offers consequence in every frame.

Death here leaves stains on memory, language, and friendship.

The final moments resist revenge and reject triumph. Closure never comes to Kashmir easily. The Boy survives, though survival itself feels altered beyond recognition. He walks away from the valley carrying knowledge few adults could endure.

That image stays with you long after the credits roll: a teenager wandering through paradise with pockets full of IDs belonging to the dead.

— With a background in Law and EdTech, the author engages with the deeper structures that shape society.

# The Making of a Community Voice

In a village where opportunities often feel distant, one young man is using education, literature, and compassion to redefine what leadership looks like.



**ASIF'S LIFE TODAY IS SHAPED LESS BY HIS CV AND MORE BY HIS CHOICES.** He helps his neighbours get to hospitals when they have no one else. He negotiates with doctors, stays through treatments, and follows up after.



Gowher Bhat

The village of Pingalgam in south Kashmir doesn't often make news. It's the type of place where time feels slow, schools are modest, and young people often hold more doubt than direction.

But every now and then, someone silently rewrites that script.

Asif Majeed Bhat grew up here, in a setting far removed from the polished classrooms and promising resumes that usually shape success stories.

As a boy, he struggled to focus in school. Teachers saw him as just another distracted student, someone unlikely to go far. But something inside him resisted that label, even if he couldn't articulate it then.

Over the years, that resistance turned into a steady determination. Asif didn't just pass through the education system, he transformed his relationship with it.

Today, he holds two postgraduate degrees, one in Urdu and another in Mass Communication and Journalism. He is preparing for his PhD and aiming to



qualify for the National Eligibility Test.

For someone once written off as below average, the academic milestones are remarkable. But they're only part of the story.

Asif's life today is shaped less by his CV and more by his choices. He helps his neighbours get to hospitals when they have no one else. He negotiates with doctors, stays through treatments, and follows up after.

Often, the people he helps are strangers. But for Asif, it's all part of being present in his community.

One of the causes closest to him is girls' education. In a region where old attitudes still influence whether daughters finish school, Asif often intervenes. Not with loud arguments, but with calm conviction.

Parents who once planned to pull their daughters out of school say they changed their minds after he visited their homes. He doesn't offer pressure, he offers perspective.

His social activism doesn't end there. In nearby villages, he speaks to young people about the value of sports, clean

water, trees, and waste reduction. He makes time for small gatherings and big ideas, hoping that even one changed mind might ripple outward.

Still, his favorite medium is language. Urdu isn't just something he studied, it's something he lives.

Asif writes poetry, runs podcasts, and organizes informal literary events where young writers are encouraged to read their work aloud, often for the first time. For many, it's the first time they've been told their voice matters.

He's helped friends go from scrib-

bling poems in private to publishing their first books. He uses social media, recordings, streaming, to keep a centuries-old language alive and relevant. Through podcasts, he brings scholars, officials, and everyday people into the conversation, connecting tradition with contemporary challenges.

And while he may be known in his district as a reformer and a thinker, in his home, he's simply a son who helps his mother in the kitchen and his father in the garden. Neighbours often mention how grounded he remains. Despite his workload, he still carries groceries, tends to chores, and stays connected to village life.

What stands out about Asif isn't just his service, it's his consistency.

He doesn't lead a campaign or an NGO. He simply shows up, day after day, choosing to help, choosing to learn, and choosing to lift others as he climbs. His work is stitched into the rhythm of rural life: quiet, steady, and deeply human.

He recently published his first book and is working on a second. But writing, for him, isn't about recognition. It's about reflection. He sees it as a way to preserve voices and challenge injustice, especially in a place where silence often surrounds social issues.

In a time when many young people feel stuck between pressure and confusion, Asif's story offers an alternative: growth through effort, meaning through service, and change that begins at home.

— The writer is a Pulwama-based English language instructor.

## J&K Set To Spread Red Carpet For International Film Festival This Year

KO Web Desk

Jammu: In a significant initiative to promote cinema, culture, and tourism, the Government of Jammu & Kashmir has initiated plans to host a prestigious international film festival through the Department of Information & Public Relations (DIPR).

The decision was taken during a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, which was attended by the Additional Chief Secretary, Finance; Additional Chief Secretary, Tourism; Commissioner Secretary, Information; Director, Information & Public Relations, and other senior officers.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary directed the Information Department to begin preparations for this maiden film festival in the Union Territory. He emphasized the need for a professionally managed event of national stature, drawing parallels with the International Film Festival of India held in Goa.

To ensure seamless execution, it was decided that a dedicated committee will be constituted at the earliest to oversee all arrangements related to the festival. The committee will be responsible for planning, coordination, and overall supervision to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the event.

The Chief Secretary further instructed that a competent and experienced agency be identified and engaged for efficient management of the

festival. He stressed the importance of exploring best practices by studying similar events organized across the country.

Underscoring the importance of adhering to timelines, he directed that the process be initiated promptly, with the issuance of the work order to the selected agency targeted before the end of May.

The Commissioner Secretary, Information, while addressing logistical and financial aspects, informed that the National Film Development Corporation of India has indicated reasonable financial requirements for organizing the event. She added that the Department has already undertaken the necessary groundwork and is well-prepared to ensure its success.

The proposed festival is envisaged to be held after the conclusion of the annual Amarnath Yatra, with final dates to be decided by the concerned department.

Highlighting the importance of inclusive development and tourism promotion, it was also decided that the festival will not be confined to Srinagar alone. Film screenings and related events will be organized across multiple scenic locations, including Baderwah, Pahalgam, Gulmarg, and Jammu, thereby boosting both emerging and established tourist destinations.

This initiative marks a major step towards positioning Jammu & Kashmir as a vibrant hub for film tourism and cultural engagement at the national level

## Oil Cos Losing ₹20 On Petrol, ₹100 On Diesel; Prices Unchanged: Govt

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: State-owned fuel retailers are incurring losses of about Rs 20 per litre on petrol and roughly Rs 100 per litre on diesel as pump prices remain frozen for nearly four years despite a surge in global oil prices, the government said on Thursday, signalling there is no immediate plan to raise retail fuel rates.

Dismissing reports of a potential Rs 25-28 per litre increase in petrol and diesel prices after assembly elections, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) said in a post on X that "there is no such proposal under consideration by the government".

At a news briefing on developments in West Asia, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in MoPNG, said international prices of crude oil (raw material used to make fuel like petrol and diesel) and LPG rates have been very volatile, yet the government has not increased prices.

Crude which was USD 70 per barrel last year, averaged over USD 113 this month, she said. "There is a huge increase... in spite of that the government has not increased prices and the effort of the government has been to keep the prices stable."

Retail petrol and diesel prices have remained frozen since early April 2022 -- a period during which oil prices rose in some months and fell in other times. When prices fell, state-owned oil firms made handsome profits, which they used to set off

losses when rates rose.

Sharma said despite the increase in oil prices after war in West Asia, the government has not increased retail pump rates. "The effort of the government has been to keep the price stable."

The sharp increase in prices in international markets, on which India is 88 per cent dependent to meet its oil needs, has led to PSUs incurring under-recoveries on petrol and diesel, she said.

Under-recoveries -- the difference between retail price and the desired rate if domestic prices were aligned with import parity -- vary on daily basis.

"(Under-recovery) may be around Rs 20 (per litre) on petrol and around Rs 100 (a litre) on diesel," she said.

She, however, hastened to add that government interventions so far have been to provide stability in terms of price and it will continue to do that.

The government last month cut tax on petrol and diesel by Rs 10 a litre each so as to ensure that "the burden of high oil prices are not transferred to consumers," she said.

Alongside, the government also imposed a tax on fuel export so as to "motivate" refiners to prioritise domestic sales, she said.

On cooking gas LPG, she said while the Saudi CP -- the benchmark for LPG pricing -- has increased 102 per cent between July 2023 and April 2026, rates in the country have fallen 17 per cent.

"Data is speaking for itself and the effort of the government is

also visible," she added.

The clarification came after a report by Kotak Institutional Equities hinted of a steep increase in petrol and diesel prices once the polling for assembly elections in states like West Bengal ends on April 29. Kotak projected a Rs 25-28 a litre increase in price based on crude oil staying close to USD 120 per barrel.

The ministry said such reports are "designed to create fear and panic amongst the citizens and are mischievous and misleading".

"In fact, India is the only country where petrol and diesel prices haven't increased in the last four years," it said. "Government of India and oil PSUs have taken relentless steps in order to insulate the Indian citizens from steep increases in international prices."

International oil prices spiked after the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, and Tehran's sweeping retaliation that effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz -- one of the world's most critical energy arteries, linking the Persian Gulf to global markets and handling roughly a fifth of global oil trade along with significant volumes of liquefied natural gas.

After the Iran war, oil prices spiked from around USD 70 per barrel to USD 119 before seeing some correction. Renewed tensions have pushed Brent -- the world's most known crude oil benchmark -- to USD 103-106 per barrel.

## Rs 3,440 Cr Flood Restoration Plan Reviewed In J&K

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir administration has reviewed a comprehensive Rs 3,440.43 crore plan for permanent restoration of damages caused by floods and associated calamities in 2025.

Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo directed departments on Thursday to adhere to strict timelines and ensure swift project execution.

Chairing a high-level review meeting here, Dulloo emphasised the need to expedite approvals and tendering processes so that work execution begins by June this year. "All departments must ensure that work is tendered and completed without delay, strictly according to approved estimates and project lists," he said.

Principal Secretary for Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, Chandraker Bharti, outlined the component-wise allocation of the Rs 3,440.43 crore outlay, structured across multiple funding streams to address both immediate relief and long-term resilience.

He said the largest share of Rs 1,579.09 crore has been approved under the recovery and reconstruction component of the UT disaster response fund as central financial assistance based on the post disaster needs assessment (PDNA).

This includes Rs 1,421.18 crore as Central share and Rs 157.909 crore as the UT share, he said.

"The funds are aimed at permanent restoration of

critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, irrigation systems and other public assets, with a 'build back better' approach," Bharti said.

He said a high-level committee approved an additional Rs 330.34 crore under SDRF/NDRF norms to meet the immediate and residual impacts of disasters, including floods, flash floods, landslides and cloudbursts.

The meeting also reviewed the strategy for utilising Rs 1,431 crore under the Special Additional Central Assistance (SASCI) component to bridge critical gaps and support resilience-oriented interventions.

"Of this, Rs 860 crore has been earmarked for the R&B sector, Rs 315 crore for Jal Shakti, Rs 173 crore for the Power Development Department, Rs 51 crore for Agriculture Production and Rs 32 crore for Youth Services and Sports," he said.

Bharti highlighted capacity-building measures and said the National Institute of Disaster Management has been requested to train officers and officials to strengthen institutional capacity for effective project formulation, implementation and monitoring.

Dulloo stressed strict adherence to the guidelines of the Disaster Management Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs. "Project proposals must align with PDNA findings and there should be no duplication of funding, particularly between R&R and SASCI components," he said, adding that the Ministry will closely monitor the execution of these works.

### CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

#### WB Records 92%

"expiry" of the "TMC's 15-year-old syndicate system and maha jungle raj" in West Bengal, while Banerjee asserted that polling held so far in the first phase indicates "the TMC is already in a position to win", and her party predicts a win in 125-134 seats out of 152 constituencies.

The second phase for the remaining 142 of 294 seats in West Bengal will be held on April 29. The counting for all four states and one Union Territory--Kerala, Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry--will be on May 4.

Over 90 per cent in the first phase of the West Bengal Assembly elections set the tone for a fiercely contested battle, even as allegations over electoral roll revisions, sporadic violence and duelling political narratives underscored a high-stakes opening round between the ruling TMC and the BJP.

Meanwhile, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said the 91.78 per cent voter turnout in the first phase of the West Bengal assembly polls was the state's "highest-ever percentage since Independence".

Polling across 152 constituencies in 16 districts remained brisk through the day, with long queues at booths, particularly in rural belts, reflecting intense mobilisation by both camps in what is being seen as a crucial early test of strength.

The high participation in Bengal came against the backdrop of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, which saw over 91 lakh names deleted statewide -- an exercise that has moved to the centre of the political contest, shaping both campaign rhetoric and voter perception.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who is camping in the state, visited the BJP's election control room at Salt Lake during polling hours and reviewed the situation with party leaders, signalling the premium the party has placed on Phase 1, particularly in north Bengal. He is expected to remain in the state till April 27, the last day of campaigning for the second phase.

Compared with the 2021 Assembly elections, when turnout ranged between 79 and 86 per cent across phases, the current figures mark a sharp spike in voter turnout in West Bengal, though the SIR-linked contraction of the electorate complicates direct comparisons. In 2021, the BJP won 59 of these 152 seats against the TMC's 93.

Reports of clashes, allegations of intimidation and attacks on candidates--including two from the BJP--from several constituencies prompted the Election Commission to seek detailed reports even as it maintained that polling in West Bengal was "largely peaceful".

A record 2,450 central paramilitary companies, comprising nearly 2.5 lakh personnel, have been deployed across the state for the polls, with over 8,000 polling stations identified as highly sensitive.

In Tamil Nadu, the contest is primarily between the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance and the AIADMK-led NDA. Chief Minister M K Stalin centred his campaign around the "Dravidian Model" of governance and accused the AIADMK of being controlled by the BJP in Delhi. AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami is fighting to return

to the treasury benches after five years.

Tamil Nadu registered 73.63 per cent voting in 2021. It recorded its highest voter turnout --78.29 percent-- in the 2011 assembly polls, which the AIADMK swept.

Incidentally, through the SIR, the electorate size has been reduced from 6.41 crore recorded in October 2025 to the current 5.73 crore. Consequently, the 2021 polls saw about 6.29 crore people registered, 56 lakh voters more than this year.

Attributing the surge in voter turnout in Tamil Nadu to the Election Commission's reforms, BJP leader Narayanan Thirupathy said the high polling percentage across the state reflects a robust democratic spirit and signals a confident path to victory for the NDA.

"The full credit to SIR. Hats off to the Election Commission. We have seen it in Bihar, Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and now Pondicherry and now in Tamil Nadu. So, full credit to them," Thirupathy told PTI Videos.

#### Buried In Absence

26 teachers, all women, one of them six months pregnant. Seven parents, a school bus driver and a clinic technician were also among the dead.

Forensic teams worked to identify the bodies, many of them mutilated beyond recognition. Yet even after extensive DNA testing, they could find no trace of Makan.

Across the wider war, Iran's Legal Medicine Organisation reports that thousands have been killed, with many bodies initially unidentifiable due to the scale of destruction. Still, among all those lost, only a handful remain without confirmed remains.

Makan is one of them.

For nearly seven weeks, his father Cyrus searched the ruins. From midday on the day of the attack until the early hours of the next morning, and then again in the days and weeks that followed, he returned--hoping for anything.

"Even if they found a fingernail," he said.

But there was nothing.

All the other children in Makan's class were killed. Still, his father clung to the faint hope that his son might have escaped after the first strike. That hope lingered until the 38th day, when Makan's uncle found a single shoe lying some distance from the wreckage. The family recognised it instantly. A damaged blue sweater was also recovered.

Nothing else.

"I was terrified by the idea of having to place Makan in the grave; I couldn't stand that," his mother later said. "I prayed to God for help, and it may explain why we couldn't find him."

In the end, there was no burial. No grave to visit. No body to mourn over.

Only a shoe--now placed in a box at a local mosque, a small and silent marker of a life erased by war.

In Minab, the dead have been counted. But for one family, the loss remains immeasurable. --This report is based on an Al Jazeera account.

#### Civil Defence

exercises are critical in preparing teams for real-life situations and minimising risks to life and property.

In Ganderbal, a similar drill was conducted at Government Degree College under the

supervision of the district administration in coordination with police. The exercise simulated emergency scenarios, including blackout situations, to enhance preparedness among students, staff and the general public.

Participants were trained in evacuation protocols, crisis communication and coordinated response strategies. Officials said the drill provided a practical understanding of how timely intervention and collective action can reduce risks during emergencies. Civil administration, SDRF and traffic police were among the participants.

In Budgam, a high-intensity mock drill was held at Government Degree College in the presence of Deputy Commissioner Athar Aamir Khan and senior officials from police, SDRF, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), fire and emergency services, and the health department.

The exercise recreated real-time emergency conditions, including search and rescue operations, evacuation drills and emergency medical response. Students and staff actively took part in the programme.

Officials said the drills were aimed at assessing the preparedness of response agencies while also raising public awareness, particularly among students, about disaster readiness.

Authorities reiterated that coordinated efforts, timely action and sustained awareness are key to effective disaster response and risk reduction. They added that such mock drills will continue to be conducted regularly to strengthen preparedness at both institutional and community levels.

#### Education Beyond

education from pre-primary to Class 8 since 2014 under the 'Har Ghar Shiksha' initiative, with more than half of its students coming from economically weaker sections.

Addressing a gathering, the Lieutenant Governor said the new higher secondary building and skill infrastructure would expand access to quality education for disadvantaged students. Once fully completed, the building is expected to cater to over 1,500 students, while proposed residential facilities for 100 boys would boost the local economy and transform backward areas.

Calling upon students and teachers to contribute to nation-building, Sinha said classrooms must adapt to the changing global landscape to position India as a leading knowledge economy.

"We must strengthen cultural awareness in students, as unity in diversity defines global society. Communication skills must be promoted for clear expression, enabling the new generation to improve lives, uphold democratic values and foster collaboration for a prosperous J&K," he said.

He emphasised that education focused solely on marks and narrow academics is "unfit for the future" and stressed the need to nurture creativity, critical thinking, moral decision-making, collaboration and lifelong learning.

Highlighting rapid technological shifts, the Lieutenant Governor said the professional world now demands continuous learning, skilling and upskilling. "We are at a threshold where AI and automation are transforming industries, offices, hospitals and schools, and our human resource must stay a step ahead,"

he added.

Sinha also underlined that every student, including those talented in art, craft, music or entrepreneurship, deserves equal respect and opportunity.

Referring to the National Education Policy, he said the policy is a "potent tool" to meet national needs, bridge rural-urban and socio-regional gaps, and accelerate economic growth.

"NEP is a powerful societal asset and a reliable partner for meritorious students. India will emerge as a robust knowledge economy, nurturing generations with scientific temper, moral strength, cultural values, skills and a spirit of service," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor further said true education must balance external knowledge with self-awareness. "Students must be equipped not only with skills for the outer world but also emotional resilience for the inner world. This holistic approach is the core duty of every school," he said, adding that students must blend science with values for overall progress.

The initiative by Bharat Sevashram Sangha has received support from Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited and other donors.

Among those present were MP Jugal Kishore Sharma, MLA Nagrota Devyani Rana, former Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Singh, senior officials, representatives of Bharat Sevashram Sangha, and other dignitaries.

#### From Sniffer Dogs

"The canine unit plays a crucial role in identifying hidden contraband and disrupting the supply chain of narcotics," an official said, adding that intensified vehicle checking is underway across the district. Suspicious vehicles are being thoroughly searched at designated naka points in line with standard operating procedures.

Authorities said the increased deployment is intended not only to intercept drug consignments but also to act as a deterrent to peddlers operating in the region.

Parallel to these enforcement measures, a community-led initiative has taken shape in neighbouring Anantnag district, where imams and mosque management committees have joined the government's campaign against drug abuse.

During congregational prayers and through mosque loudspeakers, religious leaders have been urging people to stay away from drugs and refrain from illegal cultivation of narcotic substances such as cannabis and opium poppy. The messaging has focused on the social, moral and legal consequences of drug abuse, while calling on families to play a proactive role in identifying and reporting such activities.

Police officials described the involvement of mosques as a "significant community-driven initiative" that strengthens the broader anti-drug effort.

"The proactive role of religious institutions reflects a strong police-public partnership and is expected to contribute meaningfully to the success of anti-drug campaigns," an official said. Jammu and Kashmir's anti-drug campaign is gaining momentum on multiple fronts, with enforcement agencies tightening surveillance on the ground and religious institutions stepping in to amplify awareness at

the community level.

In south Kashmir's Shopian district, police have deployed a specialised canine unit to strengthen action against drug trafficking. The move, carried out in coordination with the Central Reserve Police Force's 14th Battalion, is part of the ongoing Nasha Mukta Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan aimed at curbing the narcotics trade.

Officials said trained sniffer dogs have been stationed at multiple checkpoints as part of a focused enforcement drive. The canine unit is being used to detect concealed narcotics, often hidden in vehicles and cargo, enabling timely seizures and arrests.

"The canine unit plays a crucial role in identifying hidden contraband and disrupting the supply chain of narcotics," an official said, adding that intensified vehicle checking is underway across the district. Suspicious vehicles are being thoroughly searched at designated naka points in line with standard operating procedures.

Authorities said the increased deployment is intended not only to intercept drug consignments but also to act as a deterrent to peddlers operating in the region.

Parallel to these enforcement measures, a community-led initiative has taken shape in neighbouring Anantnag district, where imams and mosque management committees have joined the government's campaign against drug abuse.

During congregational prayers and through mosque loudspeakers, religious leaders have been urging people to stay away from drugs and refrain from illegal cultivation of narcotic substances such as cannabis and opium poppy. The messaging has focused on the social, moral and legal consequences of drug abuse, while calling on families to play a proactive role in identifying and reporting such activities.

Police officials described the involvement of mosques as a "significant community-driven initiative" that strengthens the broader anti-drug effort.

"The proactive role of religious institutions reflects a strong police-public partnership and is expected to contribute meaningfully to the success of anti-drug campaigns," an official said.

#### Houses Of Drug

personnel, the authorities demolished structures allegedly built using proceeds from drug trafficking in the Rajiv Nagar area. A senior official said the demolition drive is part of an ongoing campaign against notorious drug peddlers in the region.

"We conducted a similar drive here two to three months ago. Some more drug peddlers have since been identified, and they are currently absconding. The illegal structures constructed from money earned through the drug trade are being demolished today. Three structures are being razed," the official told reporters here.

"Drug-related activities are harming our society and ruining our children. We want to engage our youth in sports and positive activities. This effort is part of our contribution towards the nation's progress and development," he said.

Officials reiterated that the administration will continue its action against drug networks and their assets in the region

## Major Water Disruption from April 25 in Ganderbal, Srinagar Rural Areas

Syed Mohammad Burhan

**SRINAGAR:** The Jal Shakti (Public Health Engineering) Department has announced a temporary suspension of potable drinking water supply in major parts of Ganderbal district and several rural areas of Srinagar due to urgent repair works on the Sindh Power Canal.

According to an urgent public notice issued by the Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti PHE, Rural Water Supply Division Ganderbal/Srinagar, the disruption will take place from 6:00 AM on April 25 (Saturday) to 6:00 AM on April 27 (Monday). The notice, issued from the division headquarters at Duderhama Ganderbal, stated that the shutdown is necessitated by Phase-II repair works of the Sindh Power Canal being carried out by the Construction and Mechanical Division (CMD) Ganderbal.

The notice was issued under reference number JSD-PHE/RWSD/Com/831-38 dated April 22, 2026, and signed by Executive Engineer Er. Fayaz Ahmad Bhat.

As a result, the raw water supply to all water treatment plants and schemes dependent on the canal will not be available during the repair period.

The department said the decision follows directions issued by the Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Kashmir, vide communication dated April 17, 2026, as well as deliberations held during a virtual meeting on April 22, 2026.

"In view of the non-availability of raw water, potable water supply in major parts of Ganderbal district and rural areas of Srinagar falling under the jurisdiction of this division shall remain suspended during the specified period," the notice said.

In Ganderbal district, the affected areas include Ganderbal town, Nagbal, Rangil, Dariend, Malshaibagh, Babadaryadin, Khalmulla, Banjar Basti, Nunner, Gutlbagh, Baba Wayil, Wayil, Wayil Wudder, Nadirbagh, Bobsipora, Chappergund, Budkund, Bandibagh, Arch, Serch, Suderbagh, Chowdri-agh, Malpora, Hard Muradabagh, Gundrehman, Harran, Tulbagh, Kachan, Gundmumin, Hakimgund, Hatbura, Kustooripora, Sehpora, Shalbugh, Chundina, Gogjigund, Malikpora, Kokgund, Devpora and Korag.

Additionally, areas such as Gadoora, Kujjar, Rakhi Harran, Benehama, Manigam, Tulamulla, Waheedpora, Theeru and Larsun will also face disruption.

In Srinagar district, several rural localities are set to be impacted, including Gulab Bagh, Zakura, Habak, Shaheen Colony, Meerak Shah Colony, Fazal Haq Colony, Fisherman Colony Shuhama, Chatterhama, Warpo, Bakura, Inderhama, Syedpora, Daedi Nowbug, Khimber Hadoora, Syedpora Humchi, Wanihama, Batapora, Gassu Bakura and Qurashi Mohalla Tulbagh.

Other affected areas include Shanpora Guzerbal, Palpora, New Colony, Kreshbal, Bakshipora, Tangpora, Gurhanjipora, Chonchifakir, Pamposh Colony, Goripora, Shunglipora, Bank Colony, Kounsar Colony and adjoining areas, along with Dapora Anchar.

The department has urged residents to store sufficient quantities of water in advance to avoid inconvenience during the shutdown period. It has also provided contact numbers for emergency assistance, including a landline (0194-2416292) and mobile/WhatsApp numbers—9697946908, 8491052446, and 9797073882.

## CM Omar Assures Priority Redressal of Public Concerns

Press Trust of India

**JAMMU:** Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said that genuine concerns of various sections of society would be addressed on priority, and reiterated the government's commitment to inclusive development.

The assurance was given during meetings with several public and trade delegations, which called on the chief minister here and presented a wide range of developmental and industry-related issues while seeking continued policy support and facilitation, officials said.

A delegation led by Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Arun Gupta discussed key concerns related to trade and commerce.

The delegation highlighted issues affecting business activity and stressed the need for a more conducive environment to boost economic



growth and streamline operations, they said.

The industry representatives also expressed gratitude to the chief minister for restoring the Darbar Move, stating that the move has revitalised economic activity in the region, particularly benefiting markets, rental properties, hotels and the transport sector.

Another delegation, led by Vivek Verma of the Pir Panjal Welfare and Development Trust, raised a range of

developmental priorities reflecting the aspirations of the region's residents. The members emphasised the tourism potential of the Pir Panjal region and called for focused and sustainable efforts to harness it, they said.

They also underscored the need to strengthen healthcare and education infrastructure, ensure drinking water supply, and expand employment opportunities, especially for the youth in border areas.

### NIA Attaches Property under UAPA in Rajpora

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The National Investigation Agency on Thursday attached an immovable property under UAPA in Rajpora area of south Kashmir's Pulwama district.

An official KNO that the NIA team attached the property belonging to Tanveer Ahmad Wani son of Ghulam Ahmad Wani under the provisions of section 33 (1) of the unlawful activities (Prevention)

The property comprises land measuring 3 Kanals and 4 Marlas, recorded under Khewat No. 98, Khata No. 527, and Survey No. 1678/858, at Abhama and Draklaran.

## Decade On, Larmoh Awantipora Bridge Remains in Shambles

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** A vital bridge in Larmoh village of Awantipora in South Kashmir's Pulwama district continues to lie in a state of neglect nearly ten years after it was damaged even as locals continue to demand for its urgent reconstruction to restore safe connectivity.

Locals told KNO that this link connecting Larmoh with neighboring areas, the bridge has remained severely deteriorated for years without any substantial repair or rebuilding efforts.

Locals allege that the prolonged inaction has left them with no option but to either risk crossing the unsafe structure or take lengthy and inconvenient alternative routes.

Residents said the bridge plays a crucial role in their daily lives, particularly for students, patients, and farmers who depend on it to reach schools, healthcare centers, and markets.

"It has been almost a decade since the

bridge was damaged, yet no meaningful steps have been taken. Crossing it every day feels like risking our lives, as we never know when it might give way," said a local resident.

Another villager expressed frustration over what he described as official apathy, stating that repeated appeals to the concerned authorities have failed to bring any relief.

"We have approached the authorities multiple times, but there has been no response. The situation becomes even more alarming during emergencies, especially at night or in bad weather," he said.

According to locals, the most vulnerable groups—school children and the elderly—bear the brunt of the situation, as they are forced to navigate the unsafe structure regularly.

"Our children cross this dangerous bridge daily to attend school. We live in constant fear for their safety. If any tragedy occurs, who will be held accountable?" a worried parent asked.

## Four Held for Providing Logistic Support to Terrorists

**SRINAGAR:** Four over ground workers (OGWs), including a woman, were arrested in Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital here for allegedly providing logistic support to terrorists, officials said on Thursday.

Police arrested the four OGWs from Hazratbal area of the city here on Wednesday night.

They identified the OGWs as Zahoor Ahmad Mir, Bashir Ahmad Bhat, and Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, all residents of Hazratbal.

The woman was identified as Shazia Mohammad, a resident of Hazratbal as well, the officials said.

They said a hand grenade, 15 AK-47 rounds, four mobile phones and some cash were recovered from their possession.

According to PTI, a case has been under against them under various sections of the UAPA and Arms Act, the officials added. (Observer News Service)

## CS Flags off Vehicles for Strengthening Legal Aid Outreach

**JAMMU:** In a significant step towards strengthening access to justice and expanding outreach of legal services to the grass-roots level, Justice Arun Palli, Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and Patron-in-Chief, J&K Legal Services Authority in the august presence of Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority and other Companion Judges of the High Court at Jammu today flagged off a fleet of Multi Utility Vehicles for District Legal Services Authorities of the Jammu Province, at High Court Complex, Janipur, Jammu.

These vehicles have been procured under the guidance of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) with the objective of strengthening the delivery of legal aid and welfare services, particularly in far-flung, rural, remote and underserved areas of the Union Territory.

Chief Justice appreciated the initiative and observed that access to justice must not remain confined to courtrooms alone, but should meaningfully reach every citizen, especially those belonging to vulnerable and marginalized sections of society. He emphasized that such initiatives are essential for taking justice to the doorsteps of the people.

Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority, also appreciated the launch of the vehicles and stated that the same would greatly enhance the outreach and efficiency of District Legal Services Authorities. His Lordship further observed that this initiative marks another important step in making legal services more accessible to the common people.

Justice Sanjeev Kumar also expressed that similar Multi Utility Vehicles are planned to be launched shortly for districts of Kashmir Province as well, so that the benefits of this initiative reach every region of the Union Territory in an equitable manner.

While interacting with media persons, Shazia Tabasum, Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority, highlighted that the vehicles shall be utilized for conducting legal awareness programmes, facilitating outreach camps, extending assistance to beneficiaries under various legal aid schemes, supporting Para Legal Volunteers, and ensuring better coordination of legal services activities at the district level. (Observer News Service)

## Minister Sharma Asks for Strict Compliance to Traffic Rules

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Transport, Youth Services & Sports, and Science & Technology, Satish Sharma on Thursday convened a review meeting regarding functioning of the Transport Department for Jammu Division at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu.

The meeting was attended by all wRegional Transport Officers (RTOs) and Assistant Regional Transport Officers (ARTOs) of the division.

The Minister had a detailed review of the departmental functioning across key domains, emphasizing transparency, efficiency and strict enforcement of transport regulations.

Taking serious note of recent road accidents, the Minister stressed that vehi-



cle fitness must be ensured without any compromise. He directed the officers to strictly enforce the fitness norms, with special attention to critical components such as tyres, mirrors, front glass and emergency exits in public transport vehicles.

Satish Sharma called for stringent action against the defaulting officers and warned that any negligence in enforcement would not be tolerated. He further directed the enforcement teams to curb the use of retreaded tyres and unauthorized vehicles plying

without valid fitness certificates.

Highlighting road safety as a top priority, the Minister issued directions for zero tolerance against overloading and repeat offenders, strict check on school buses, including CCTV compliance and speed limiting devices besides re-evaluation of hilly route permits to ensure passenger safety identification and mitigation of accident-prone black spots. He emphasized the need for coordinated efforts with the concerned agencies to reduce road ac-

cidents and ensure safer transport systems.

The Minister directed the department to intensify awareness campaigns under the road safety initiatives, including promotion of helmet use, seat belts and child safety measures. He also instructed the officers to organize special campaigns against drug abuse (Nasha Mukta Abhiyan) in collaboration with the stakeholders, including youth organizations and educational institutions.

Satish Sharma stressed the need to resolve the operational issues in the on-line platforms such as Vahan and Sarathi and ensure seamless service delivery to citizens. He also called for improving integration with digital services and reducing delays in issuance of documents like driving licences and registration certificates.

## HEALTH & MEDICAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE, ANANTNAG COLLEGE CAMPUS, DIALGAM ANANTNAG J&K-192210

Subject: Conduct of Written Test for the post of Jr. Staff Nurse advertised vide Advertisement Notice No. 03 GMCA of 2026, dated: 05-02-2026.

It is notified for information of all the eligible candidates who have applied for the Jr. Staff Nurse posts in GMC Anantnag advertised vide Advertisement Notice No. 03 GMCA of 2026, dated: 05-02-2026, that the written examination (OMR Based Objective Type) shall be conducted as per the schedule given below:

S. No.	Name of the Post	Exam Date & Day	Timing	Allocated Centre
1.	Jr. Staff Nurse	02.05.2026 (Saturday)	(12:00 PM to 01:00 PM)	Lecture Halls I, II, III & IV, Departments (Anatomy, Physiology & Biochemistry) Main campus Dialgam

- Candidates are advised to download the Admit Cards from 26.04.2026, which shall be made available on the official website of GMC Anantnag [www.gmcanantnag.ac.in](http://www.gmcanantnag.ac.in)
- Candidates can download their Admit Cards from the official website using their Login ID's.

Note:

- The candidates should read carefully all the instructions mentioned on the admit card.
- Candidates are also advised to report examination centre one hour before schedule time along with Admit Card, ID Proof (original) and recent Passport size photograph. No such candidate shall be allowed to appear in the examination who do not meet the above-mentioned pre-requisites.
- Only those candidates should appear in the written examination, who fulfil the eligibility criteria prescribed for the post as mentioned in the notification. However, permission to appear in the written examination is purely provisional subject to further verification of their documents/eligibility at any stage of selection process.
- The candidature of such applicants shall be rejected at any stage of process of selection, who are found to have misrepresented or concealed the material facts having a bearing on their eligibility.
- No electronic gadgets (Calculator, Mobile Phone, Smart Watch, Bluetooth devices, etc.) shall be allowed in the examination centre. If any such device is found with the candidate in the examination centre, his/her candidature will be cancelled and legal action under rules will be initiated against him/her.
- No TA/DA etc. will be given to appear in the written examination and the candidates should make their own arrangements.

No: GMCA/Estt/Rec./2026/ 3770-75  
Dated: 21 - 04 - 2026

DIPK-687-26  
DT: 23/04/2026

Principal/Dean,  
Govt. Medical College,  
Anantnag

# سالگرد ارتحال

## مطہ حسین انصاری

### مولانا

۲۱ مارچ ۱۹۳۵ء - ۱۲ اپریل ۲۰۰۶ء

مولانا مصطفیٰ حسین انصاری کی تریسٹھ سالہ با معنی زندگی، علم و فکر کی ایک مسلسل جدوجہد سے عبارت تھی۔ ایسی جدوجہد جو ان کے بیان اور قلم دونوں میں یکساں طور پر جھلکتی تھی۔ انہوں نے اپنی خدا اور وحانی بصیرت سے منبر و محراب کو دو قار بخشا اور اپنے شستہ و مبلغ اسلوب تحریر کے ذریعے اہل کشمیر کی علمی روایت کو نئی توانائی عطا کی۔ ان کی چھوڑی ہوئی فکر میراث آج بھی دل و دماغ کو جلا بخشتی ہے اور آئندہ نسلوں کے لیے سرچشمہ رہنمائی ہے۔

ایک صاحبِ علم و نظر عالم کی حیثیت سے، مولانا ہمیشہ فکرِ سلیم اور عقلی بصیرت پر زور دیتے رہے۔ وہ جہالت کے اندھیروں کو دور کرنے اور معاشرے میں مثبت تبدیلی لانے کے لیے شعور و تدبیر کو ناگزیر سمجھتے تھے۔ ان کی دینی بصیرت نے بے شمار افراد کو مذہب کی بارکیوں کو بہتر طور پر سمجھنے میں مدد دی۔ اپنے عہد کے ان افراد کے برعکس جو محض جذباتی اپیل پر اٹھار کرتے تھے، مولانا نے ہمیشہ دلیل، حکمت اور توازن کی راہ اختیار کی۔

آج اگرچہ وہ ہمارے درمیان موجود نہیں، مگر ان کی یاد، ان کا علم اور ان کا اندازِ فکر زندہ ہے۔ اہل علم اور سچ کے مثلاً شی انہیں ہمیشہ عقیدت اور محبت سے یاد کرتے رہیں گے۔

ان کے ۲۰ ویں یومِ وفات کے موقع پر ایک مجلسِ ترحیم منعقد کی جارہی ہے۔

مقام: آستانہ عالیہ بایامزار | بروز اتوار، ۲۶ اپریل ۲۰۲۶ء

مجلس نمازِ ظہرین کے ساتھ ہی شروع ہوگی، تمام مومنین سے شرکت کی مؤدبانہ گزارش ہے

زاکرین کرام - زاکر سید سمیع اللہ جلالی | زاکر محمد عباس بیٹٹ | زاکر سید روح اللہ کاظمی | زاکر سید مشتاق موسوی  
موضوعہ حسد - مولانا مسرور عباس انصاری

# War Shake-up: US Navy Secretary Quits Amid Iran Tensions

Agencies

WASHINGTON – US Navy Secretary John Phelan has been removed from his post in an abrupt shake-up at the Pentagon as Washington grapples with rising tensions with Iran and an ongoing maritime standoff in the Gulf, raising fresh questions about stability within the defence leadership.



Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell confirmed the move in a brief statement, saying Phelan was "departing the administration, effective immediately". He will be replaced on an acting basis by Hung Cao, a former Navy captain and Republican political candidate.

Phelan's exit makes him the first service secretary to depart during Donald Trump's second term but follows a broader pattern of dismissals and resignations among senior defence officials.

Sudden exit amid active operations The timing of Phelan's departure has raised questions in Washington, coming as the US Navy plays a central role in enforcing a blockade on Iranian ports and targeting vessels linked to the Islamic Republic during a tenuous ceasefire.

Phelan had appeared in public just a day earlier, addressing a major Navy conference and meeting lawmakers to discuss shipbuilding plans and budget priorities, underscoring how unexpected the move was.

The Navy is currently maintaining an elevated global posture, with multiple aircraft carriers deployed or heading towards the Middle East, alongside operations in the Caribbean and elsewhere.

REPORTS OF INTERNAL TENSIONS While no official explanation has been given, US media reports suggest internal disagreements may have contributed to the decision. According to Axios, a source familiar with the situation said Phelan had clashed with defence secretary Pete Hegseth and was seen as overstepping his role.

The report cited concerns that Phelan had bypassed established chains of command by communicating directly with Trump. Another source described tensions between the two men, saying they "did not get along".

Phelan, a businessman and major Trump donor, had no prior military or

## IRAN STANDOFF ADDS PRESSURE

The leadership reshuffle comes as the US faces a growing confrontation with Iran, centred on control of key maritime routes including the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran has imposed restrictions on shipping in response to what it describes as an unlawful US naval blockade, while Washington has continued to target Iranian-linked vessels. The standoff has disrupted global energy flows and raised fears of further escalation.

Iranian officials have also pointed to divisions within the US military leadership. Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf previously criticised the dismissal of senior US generals, suggesting it reflected disagreements over Washington's military strategy.

## ACTING SUCCESSOR STEPS IN

Cao, who will serve as acting Navy secretary, is a 25-year Navy veteran who served in special operations roles in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. A refugee from Vietnam as a child, he later pursued a political career, running unsuccessfully for Congress and the Senate in Virginia.

He has aligned closely with Trump-era defence priorities, including opposition to diversity initiatives in the military and support for reinstating service members dismissed over Covid-19 vaccine mandates.

## PART OF WIDER PENTAGON SHAKE-UP

His exit follows a series of high-profile dismissals under Hegseth, who has moved to reshape military leadership since taking office. In recent weeks, the defence secretary removed the Army's top officer, Gen. Randy George, and previously dismissed senior figures including Adm. Lisa Franchetti and Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown Jr., the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The changes have fuelled debate over the stability of Pentagon leadership during a period of heightened global tensions.

## India Issues Advisory Against Travel to Iran

India on Thursday advised its nationals not to travel to Iran by air or land in view of reports of commencement of some flights between the two countries.

The Indian Embassy in Tehran in its latest advisory also said that the "airspace restrictions and operational uncertainties due to regional tensions continue to affect international flight operations to and from Iran".

"In view of reports of commencement of some flights between India and Iran, and in continuation of earlier advisories, Indian citizens are strongly advised not to travel to Iran, whether by air or land," the embassy said.

It urged all Indian nationals currently in Iran to leave the country through designated land border routes in coordination

with the embassy. The embassy also provided emergency contact numbers (+989128109115, +989128109109, +989128109102 and +989932179359) and email (cons.tehran@mea.gov.in) for those in need.

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday extended the ceasefire with Iran indefinitely at the request of Pakistan to give Tehran's leadership more time to prepare a unified proposal to end the war.

The dramatic announcement came just hours before the two-week ceasefire was set to expire.

According to official data, around 9,000 Indians, including students, were in Iran when the conflict began on February 28. Nearly 1,800 Indians have returned to India so far. (PTI)

# No Bar on Women Offering Namaz in Mosques: AIMPLB to SC

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Urging the courts not to judicially determine religious practices, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on Thursday told the Supreme Court that Islam does not restrict women from coming to the mosque for namaz, but it is preferable that they stay at home.

Senior Advocate M R Shamshad, appearing for the AIMPLB, told a nine-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant that women are allowed to offer namaz in the mosque subject to some discipline. The issue, he submitted, has come up before the bench because a writ petition was filed seeking that women be allowed to pray in mosques.

"We have filed an affidavit to say that under all sects of Islam, women are allowed to enter mosques and offer prayers, subject to certain disciplines. There is no bar on them anywhere; they can come and be part of the congregation," he said.

He submitted that there is no sanctum sanctorum in the mosque, as was the impression given.

The AIMPLB counsel told the bench -- also comprising Justices B V Nagarathna, M M Sundresh, Ahsanuddin



Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Masih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan, and Joymalya Bagchi -- it is preferable that women offer namaz at home and they will get the same religious rewards as men who offer prayers at a mosque.

Intervening, Justice Amanullah said the reason behind this was that if everyone from a household goes to the mosque, then who will take care of the children?

Justice Nagarathna said that in Islam, women are not mandated to attend the congregation in a mosque.

Shamshad said the holy book, the Quran, asks to follow the Prophet, and that the manners of worship are mentioned in Hadiths.

He submitted that given the belief, practices, thought processes, adherence to religious teaching, flexibility with which a person is obliged to follow religious tenets, and the personal choice of a person to treat certain practices as essential for his belief system, it will not be prudent or possible to determine essential practices of a particular religion.

"Accordingly, it is submitted that the courts must not attempt to judicially determine the nature of religious practices. According to Article 25, to interpret what is religious practice, or for that matter, the core of the religion within the meaning of essential religious practices, these matters must be left for those who are scholars in the religion or the religious denominations, and/or the beliefs of the followers of that particular religion.

"Certain practices change with circumstances -- like in the Hajj, the manner of namaz and many other acts commonly done by the followers of Islam get altered completely. The namaz offered at the time of a burial is completely different from what is offered normally," he submitted.

He said the exercise to determine an essential religious practice, in the context of Islam, is a rigorous one.

## France Allows Visa-free Airport Transit for Indians: MEA

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Indians transiting through France exclusively by air will no longer require a transit visa, as the French government has operationalised

an agreement to remove such a requirement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal made the announcement at his weekly media briefing here, saying India welcomes the move.

Later in a statement, the MEA said the visa-free transit for Indian nationals transiting through the European territory of France has now been operationalised by the French government.

The decision showcases deep

commitment by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron to strengthen bilateral relations, the MEA said.

At the media briefing, Jaiswal said the decision reflects the enduring partnership between

India and France, elevated to the level of a 'Special Global Strategic Partnership' during the recent visit of President Macron to India, as also further facilitation of smoother movement of people, and enhancing of people-to-people ties.

"The government of France has now operationalised this agreement, and Indian nationals transiting through mainland France exclusively by air will no longer need a transit visa, with effect from 10th April, 2026," Jaiswal said.

## Ex-banker Duped of Rs 23 Cr in Digital Arrest Seeks Refund

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: A 78-year-old retired banker who lost nearly Rs 23 crore in what is being described as Delhi's biggest digital arrest fraud case has demanded a complete restitution of the money he lost along with damages, interest and liability towards capital gains tax.

Delhi resident Naresh Malhotra, who was defrauded of Rs 22.92 crore between August and September 2025, said the RBI ombudsman's order directing five banks to pay him Rs 1.31 crore, while significant collectively, falls drastically short of what he is owed and that he will not rest until the full amount is recovered.

"The compliance of banks is supposed to be 100 per cent, so I will continue to fight for restitution of the full defrauded sum," Malhotra told PTI.

Malhotra argued that the ombudsman's own findings prove institutional culpability, contending that banks which failed to adhere to the RBI's KYC and AML norms bear full and direct responsibility for enabling the fraud and must therefore repay the entire loss.

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