

Hail, Snow Spell Leaves Kashmir's Orchards Reeling



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Fresh snowfall in the higher reaches of Kashmir and a severe hailstorm across parts of north Kashmir on Friday caused damage to orchards and standing crops, leaving farmers worried about losses during the ongoing agricultural season.

The fresh spell of weather affected several parts of the Valley as an active western disturbance continued to influence Jammu and Kashmir.

Officials said higher reaches around Minimarg along the strategic Zoji La

axis received fresh snowfall during the day, resulting in a noticeable dip in temperatures. Rainfall was also recorded in several plains districts, including Srinagar, Baramulla, Kupwara and parts of central Kashmir.

Meanwhile, widespread hailstorms lashed orchard belts across Shopian, Tral and Baramulla districts, leaving growers devastated during the crucial fruit development stage.

In south Kashmir's Shopian district, villages including Pinjora, Largam, Gagren and Kanipora witnessed heavy hailstorm activity during | [More on P10](#)

Tech-Driven 'Smart Border' Along Pak, BD Soon: Shah

Says Won't Allow Demographic Change Through Infiltration

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday announced that India will launch a technology-driven "smart border" project along the Pakistan and Bangladesh frontiers within the next year to make the borders "impenetrable" and curb infiltration and illegal activities.

Addressing the annual Rustamji Memorial lecture organised by the Border Security Force in New Delhi, Shah said the



government was committed not only to stopping infiltration but also to identifying and deporting every infiltrator residing in the country.

"The government of India has decided that not only will we stop infiltration | [More on P10](#)

HC Flags Irreversible Health Risks from Unsafe Milk

Declines To Quash Proceedings Against Gujarat-Based Suppliers

M Ahmad

Srinagar, May 22: Observing that contaminated milk products can have "serious and irreversible" consequences on human health, particularly children, the High Court of J&K and Ladakh has declined to quash criminal proceedings against representatives of a Gujarat-based milk producers' cooperative over an allegedly unsafe milk sample.

"This Court cannot lose

sight of the fact that the public health is of paramount importance and must prevail over private commercial interests. The present case relates to the safety of milk, which is consumed every day by

children, infants, pregnant women, elderly persons, patients and general public," said a bench of Justice

Wasim Sadiq Nargal while rejecting a petition filed by representatives of M/s Banaskantha District Cooperative | [More on P10](#)

'Pick-&Choose' Hiring A Fraud On Constitution: High Court

Rejects Regularisation Plea Of 3 JEs Engaged By KU On 'Hire-and-Fire' Basis

M Ahmad

Srinagar: In a strong indictment of backdoor appointments and subsequent regularisation policies, the High Court of J&K and Ladakh has held that permitting the State to make ad hoc and temporary appointments through a "pick-and-choose" method without open advertisement or competitive selection amounts to a "fraud on the Constitution."

A Division Bench comprising Justice Sanjeev Kumar and Justice Sanjay Parihar further observed that constitutional courts cannot direct regularisation of such appointees, termed as "backdoor entrants", at the



cost of eligible candidates who were denied a fair opportunity to compete for public employment under Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution.

The court made the

observations in light of the Supreme Courts judgments while dismissing a batch of petitions filed by three Junior Engineers engaged by the University of Kashmir on a

contractual "hire and fire" basis.

The petitioners had assailed Advertisement Notification No. 05/2026 dated March 30, 2026, issued by KU for filling one post of Junior Engineer (Electrical) and two posts of Junior Engineer (Civil) through open selection.

The petitioners had been engaged by the University in January 2017 on consolidated monthly wages of Rs 15,000 under what the University described as a "hire and fire" arrangement. Their contractual engagements were extended periodically, with the last extension valid till May 22 this year.

Apprehending that regular recruitment would result in their disengagement, | [More on P10](#)


Enhance Random Checks Ahead Of Eid: IGP

Press Trust Of India


Srinagar: Kashmir Police chief VK Birdi on Friday reviewed security and logistical arrangements for the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha and the annual Amarnath yatra, a police spokesperson said.

During a meeting at PCR Kashmir, district SSPs gave detailed presentations on security preparedness, deployment plans, traffic regulation, crowd management measures, and other logistical arrangements for Eid-ul-Azha celebrations and the annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY), the spokesperson said.

Highlighting the significance of the Eid celebrations, Birdi, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir Zone, directed officers to implement robust crowd management measures at mosques and major | [More on P10](#)



Consistent Progress of Youth The Driving Force of Viksit Bharat



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Conclusion of Trial Will Take Time

SC Grants Bail to UAPA Accused

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Supreme Court on Friday granted bail to Suhail Ahmad Thokar, who was arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for allegedly conspiring with banned militant outfits to recruit "hybrid" militants, radicalise youth and carry out terror activities in Jammu and Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and

Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi passed the order while hearing Thokar's plea challenging a September 2023 judgment of the Delhi High Court, which had denied him bail in the case being investigated by the National Investigation Agency.

The apex court granted bail after considering the period already spent by Thokar in custody and observing that the conclusion of the trial would take time.

"Considering the period already | [More on P10](#)



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PUBLIC NOTICE

I Syed Nabiz Ul Hassan Hamdani R/O Sat Boni, Lal Bazar Sgr, F/O Syeda Zainab Hamdani who is studying in Green Valley Educational Institute need to get her mother's name corrected as Ambreen Yousuf in place of Ambreen Syed mentioned in her school records. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

bko

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Abid Ali Matto S/O Ghulam Hussain Matto resident of Takiya Lal Shah Srinagar do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that my name has been incorrectly recorded as Abid Ali in my bank account passbook Book bearing account no.0391040100010185 That my correct and official name is Abid Ali Matto I hereby request all concerned authorities to take note of this correction and update their records accordingly. Henceforth, I shall be known and recognized as Abid Ali Matto for all official and legal purposes. If any person has any objection to this correction, they may submit their objection to the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained

info

ASF ENTERPRISES

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NOTICE

I FAZLE REHMAN PHAMDA S/O FAYAZ AHMAD PHAMDA R/O FAQIR GUJREEE VTC SRINAGAR (M.CROP) PO.BREIN SUB DISTRICT SRINAGAR am applying for contractor Card-Dee class in the office of the JKPDC chief office Bemina Srinagar anybody having any objection may please contact above mentioned department within a period of seven days after that No objection will be entertained

ab

NOTICE

I MOHD IQBAL NAJAR S/O AB KHALIQ NAJAR R/O NEAR JAMIA MASJID AHALIDEES TAKIYA BEHRAM SHAH ANANTNAG am applying for contractor Card-Dee class in the office of the JKPDC chief office Bemina Srinagar anybody having any objection may please contact above mentioned department within a period of seven days after that No objection will be entertained.

ab

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the original No Objection Certificate (NOC) issued by Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services Limited (referenced on the RC as "MAH. AND MAH.") regarding the vehicle detailed below has been lost/misplaced:
 Vehicle Registration No: JK01R 5726
 Registered Owner: Mr. Abdul Rahim Sofi
 Father's Name: Mr. Abdul Ahad Sofi
 Address: Raj Bagh, Srinagar
 Make & Model: Maruti 800 (Saloon)
 Chassis No: MA3ECA12502845206
 Engine No: F8BIN4453366
 The finder or anyone having any objection to the issuance of a duplicate NOC or removal of hypothecation from the records of the Registering Authority (RTO Srinagar) should lodge their claim/objection with the RTO Srinagar within [e.g., 7 or 14] days of the publication of this notice.
 Contact Details:
 Name: Mr. Abdul Rahim Sofi
 Address: Raj Bagh, Srinagar
 Phone Number: 9797870668, 9541330447

mcb

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Imtiaz Ahmad Buchh, R/o Buchpora Main Road, New Colony, Srinagar, hereby declare that due to an inadvertent error, the names of my wife and daughter were wrongly recorded in the school records of G.D. Goenka School Lal bazar.

The details are as follows:

Incorrect Name: Syed Aysha Imtiaz
 Correct Name: Syed Ayesha Imtiaz
 Mother's Name (Incorrect): Syed Masarat
 Mother's Name (Correct): Syed Masrat Buchh

If any person has any objection to the above-mentioned corrections, they may inform the school authority of G.D. Goenka School, Lal bazar within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. Thereafter, no objection shall be entertained.

Media line adst

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform general public that the name of my son, as mentioned in his Aadhaar Card, is incorrectly recorded as SYED MOHAMMAD MEHDI RAZVI while as his actual name is AGA SYED MEHDI. Now I want to change his name from old name (SYED MOHAMMAD MEHDI RAZVI) to new name (AGA SYED MEHDI). In future he will be known as AGA SYED MEHDI. Any person who has any objections or concerns regarding these changes is requested to raise them within 07 days from the date of this notice.
 Syed Assadullah Razvi F/O-AGA SYED MEHDI
 Yagipora Magam J&K 193401

bmj

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for the information of the general public that my name has been wrongly written as "GHULZAR AHMAD BHAT" instead of my correct name "GULZAR AHMAD BHAT" in my school records/documents. Now, I have applied for correction of my name in the records of the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education. If anybody has any objection in this regard, he/she may file the same before the concerned office within seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.
 Correct Name: GULZAR AHMAD BHAT
 Parentage: S/O GHULAM QADIR BHAT
 R/O: WANIGAM PAYEEN PATTAN

bmj

Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir
Office of the Municipal Council Ganderbal

Fax /Ph: 0194-2416090 e-mail: ceo-mcganderbal-jk@nic.in

Subject: Outsource of (30 No.of Sanitation Labours Day and Night) for a period of 2 Months Year at Municipal Council Ganderbal through Jktenders Portal.

AUCTION NOTICE

For and on behalf of Government of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory, e-tenders (in single cover system) are invited from the interested persons /parties /firms/ Companies outsourcing of Sanitation Labours at Municipal Council Ganderbal.

| S No | Particulars |
|------|---|
| 1 | Outsource of (30 No.of Sanitation Labours Day and Night) for a period of 2 Months Year at Municipal Council Ganderbal w.e.f 28-06-2026. |

Terms and conditions:

- The aspiring/ interested bidder must be bonifide person/party with sound financial back ground holding PAN and TAN and should submit bids in two covers. The first cover should contain the following documents as qualifying criteria.
 - Copy of PAN card, Aadhaar Card and Domicile Certificate.
 - Copy of Turn over certificate of Chattered Accountant of Rs:-1.00 Crore annually of Last 3 Years
 - Experience certificate at least 4 Years in relevant field (outsourcing), GST Registration certificate, EPF Registration and ESI Registration of agency, I.S.O registration certificate, ISO 9001:2015 ISO 41001:2018, ISO 45001:2018, ISO 14001:2015 Employee State Insurance Corporation Certificate Registration Certificate (ESIC), Fresh Bank solvency of Rs:-50.00 Lacs of Firm not more than 6 Months Agency, Labour License, Income Tax Returns certificate, LIN Certificate and ESI Challan's from last 6 Months Receipts.
- An Affidavit duly registered before the Court /Public Notary certifying that there is nothing outstanding from any Municipal Body of Urban Local Bodies Kashmir.
- Defaulter Persons are not allowed to participate in the bid.
- The second cover should contain financial bid dully offered in a neat and clean manner recorded in both words and figures with a paste of transparent tape upon the level of offered bid.
- While opening the tenders the constituted team will in the first step open the cover of qualifying criteria bid. Once the qualifying criteria cover is found up to level then the financial bid will be opened.
- The intending bidder shall be bound to accompany Call Deposit Receipt (CDR) for an amount of Rs. 30,000/- (Rupees Thirty Thousand only) and Tender Document fee of Rs. 1950/- (One Thousand, Nine Hundred and Fifty only) as per above referred details from any Nationalized/ Scheduled Bank pledged to Chief Executive Officer Municipal Council, Ganderbal without which no bid document can be issued.
- The persons /parties against whom any outstanding amount exists on the records of this department on account of any type of contract cannot participate in the bid. If any such person who participated in the bid and later on the outstanding surfaced before the department / Municipality, his contract shall seized along with his CDR.
- The outsource labours will work as Sanitation workers round the clock at Maingam Yatra Base Camp in Shift manner.
- The selected agency shall be bound to deploy 30% of Female staff against the total outsourced personnels.
- The payment will be made to the concerned agency after receiving the attendance Certificate (Muster Roll) from the Sanitary Inspector on monthly basis.
- The rates offered by the interested parties shall be inclusive of all applicable taxes.
- In-case of any dispute arising between the parties with respect of any of the conditions as laid down here in above or any ambiguity the same will be referred to the arbitrator (i.e) Director Urban Local Bodies Kashmir and the decision of the Arbitrator shall be final and binding upon both the parties.
- The successful bidder shall be bound not to sublet the contract to any other person /parties/ firm.
- If the progress of the agency remains successful, the term of contract will be extended after obtaining approval from the competent Authority.

Instructions to the Bidders regarding E- Tendering process:

- To participate in bidding process, bidders have to 'JKTENDERS Portal'.
- Bids will be opened online as per time schedule.
- Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with the bid.
- Note:- Scan all the documents on 100 dpi with black and white option.
- The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission due to any reasons.
- Income Tax from last Three Years.
- Bidder should have at least one work order more than 30.00 Lacs
- The Bidder must have to upload (soft copies) of the following documents (Photostat/Original should be clearly seen in all respect with Ink Signed and Seal):-
 Valid original Bank Challan/Receipt
 Call Deposit Receipt (CDR)
 Valid PAN/TAN Card No. Aadhaar Card and Domicile Certificate.
 Court Affidavit.
 The Bidder should upload the Tender Document form attached below (Not Mandatory).
 Bidder must ensure to upload scanned copies of all necessary documents including
 BID Securing Declaration and tender documents fee in terms of soft copies with technical bid. No document (s) which has /have not been uploaded shall not be entertained in the form of hard copy. However, in case of any clarification the bidders shall have to produce original documents in support of soft copies if need arises.
 Local Domicile Kashmir Province Requirement for Operational Efficiency
 The bidder/contractor must be a domicile of Kashmir Province only. This condition is essential considering the nature of sanitation services, which require immediate availability of manpower, especially for early morning operations, emergency sanitation drives, and unforeseen situations such as medical exigencies, natural calamities, or public health concerns.
 A locally based contractor shall be in a position to ensure prompt replacement of workers, maintain punctuality, and guarantee continuity of essential municipal services without disruption.
 Submission of Wage Records Prior to Payment
 The contractor shall submit detailed wage payment records/sheets of all engaged sanitation workers on a monthly basis. These records must clearly indicate worker details, attendance, wage rates, and payment acknowledge Jktendersents.
 No payment shall be released by Municipal Council Ganderbal unless such records are verified and found satisfactory. Failure to comply shall render the claim liable for rejection without assigning any reason.
 Adherence to Minimum Wages and Affidavit Requirement
 The contractor shall ensure that wages paid to sanitation workers are not less than the minimum wages prescribed by the Government from time to time.
 The contractor shall also submit a duly attested affidavit clearly stating the wage structure and confirming that payments are being made in compliance with government norms.
 Condition for Release of Monthly Payments
 This office shall release payment to the contractor strictly on a monthly basis, subject to:
 Certification of satisfactory service delivery, and submission of proof of full disbursement of wages to workers for the previous month
 Any delay or discrepancy in wage payment shall result in withholding of the contractor's bill.
 Compliance with Labour Laws
 The contractor shall strictly adhere to all applicable labour laws, rules, and regulations, including but not limited to provisions related to wages, working conditions, social security, and safety of sanitation workers.
 Any violation shall be treated as a breach of contract and may lead to termination, apart from legal action as warranted.
 General Clause/rules shall be applicable to contract
 Further details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned on any working day during office hours

No: MC/Gbl/2026/1806-08
 DIPK-NB-567/26 Dated: 22.05.2026.

Sd/-
 Chief Executive Officer,
 Municipal Council Ganderbal.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES, KASHMIR
 Health Secretariat (Swastha Bhawan), Bemina Bypass, Srinagar 190018

Email:dhsk-pa@jk.gov.in Website:www.dhskashmir.org

Dr. Mehwish,
 Medical Officer,
 NTPHC Naidkhai, Block Hajin

NOTICE

No.: Est-3/1-133/2024-31/7895453

Dated: 21/05/2026

Subject: Notice regarding unauthorized absence.

Whereas, Chief Medical Officer Bandipora vide No. **CMOB/Est/2026-27/248-49 dated 17.04.2026** reported that, you availed three days casual leave w.e.f. 09.02.2026 to 11.02.2026 after which you have not reported back to duties.

Whereas, Block Medical Officer Bandipora has served several explanations to you, vide letter No.'s BMOH/Estt/1969 dated 20.02.2026, BMOH/Estt/2047-48 dated 10.03.2026 and BMOH/Estt/2050-52 dated 31.03.2026, to resume back to duties, but you have failed to do so.

Whereas, you should note that unauthorized absence attracts action under Article 128 of J&K CSR, which includes loss of appointment.

Now, therefore, a **Notice** is hereby served to you, providing an opportunity to resume your duties within a week positively from the date of issuance of this notice. Failing which, disciplinary proceedings shall be initiated against you under rules in vogue.

DIPK-1541/26
 dated: 22-05-2026

Dy Director
 Health Services Kashmir

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES, KASHMIR
 Health Secretariat (Swastha Bhawan), Bemina Bypass, Srinagar 190018

Email:dhsk-pa@jk.gov.in Website:www.dhskashmir.org

Dr. Mahvash,
 Medical Officer,
 SDH Uri, Baramulla

NOTICE

No.: Est-3/1-133/2021-174/7665921

Dated: 21/05/2026

Subject: Notice regarding unauthorized absence.

Whereas, Block Medical Officer Uri, vide No. **Estt/BMOU/604-06 dated 22.01.2026**, issued a show cause notice to you, for remaining unauthorized absent from duties w.e.f. 01.12.2025; and

Whereas, as per the report received from Block Medical Officer Uri vide letter No. **Est/BMOU/616 dated 21.02.2026** and No. **Est/BMOU/68-70 dated 24.04.2026**, you joined back on the said notice but attended only 2 night duties (on 05.02.2026 & 12.02.2026) after that you resorted to unauthorized absence again and are still unauthorized absent from your legitimate duties.

Whereas, you should note that unauthorized absence attracts action under Article 128 of J&K CSR, which includes loss of appointment.

Now, therefore, a **2nd Notice** is hereby served to you, providing again an opportunity to resume your duties within a week positively from the date of issuance of this notice. Failing which, disciplinary proceedings shall be initiated against you under rules in vogue.

DIPK-1540/26
 dated: 22-05-2026

Dy Director
 Health Services Kashmir

CM Extends Greetings on Urs of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani (RA)

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday extended warm greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of the annual Urs of revered saint Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani (RA), popularly known as Ameer-e-Kabeer.

In his message, the Chief Minister highlighted the immense spiritual, cultural and social contributions of Hazrat Ameer-e-Kabeer (RA), whose teachings of peace, compassion, brotherhood and righteousness continue to guide humanity and inspire generations across Jammu and Kashmir and beyond.

The Chief Minister said that the revered saint played a pivotal role in spreading the message of Islam, promoting communal harmony and enriching



the region's spiritual and cultural heritage through his wisdom, scholarship and exemplary character. He urged the people to imbibe the noble values preached by the saint and work collectively towards strengthening mutual respect, unity and harmony in society.

The Chief Minister prayed for peace, prosperity and well-being of the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the blessed occasion.

Camel Traders Reach Kashmir as New Eid Tradition Draws Attention



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A practice once largely unfamiliar in Kashmir is gradually finding space in Eid-ul-Adha preparations, with camel traders arriving in the Valley and encouraging people to opt for camel sacrifice ahead of the festival.

Livestock markets across parts of Kashmir have begun to see camels, drawing curiosity among buyers and adding a different dimension to the traditional Eid trade dominated by sheep, goats, and cattle.

Traders dealing in camels said interest in the practice has increased over recent years, particularly among groups of people looking for a shared and comparatively economical option for sacrifice.

Under Islamic tradition, a camel is among the animals most permissible for sacrifice during Eid-ul-Adha.

Islamic teachings permit a camel sacrifice to be shared by up to seven persons, making it financially manageable compared to purchasing separate sacrificial animals individually. The practice, while histori-

cally more common in desert regions, remained relatively uncommon in Kashmir where sheep and goats traditionally formed the core of Eid sacrifices.

That pattern, traders say, is slowly changing.

Camel sellers arriving in Kashmir ahead of Eid said awareness regarding Islamic permissibility and the shared nature of camel sacrifice has encouraged interest among some sections of the public.

"People are asking questions and showing curiosity. Many see it as a practical and affordable option for several families or friends together," a trader said at a local livestock market.

According to KNT, the growing visibility of camels in markets has also turned them into a point of attraction, with visitors gathering around transport vehicles and temporary holding areas to inspect the animals.

The emergence of camel trade in Kashmir markets reflects changing consumer choices and growing exposure to practices followed elsewhere in the Muslim world.

SANJY-2026

Authorities Assess Pilgrim Facilities Ahead of Amarnath Yatra 2026

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo and Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb Friday visited Yatra Transit Camp at Pantha Chowk to review the onsite arrangements being put in place for the smooth and seamless conduct of the upcoming Annual Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY)-2026.

The visit was aimed to ensure seamless arrangements and better facilities for devotees traveling to the Shri Amarnathji cave during the annual pilgrimage, halting at the Transit camp, Panthachowk.

During the visit the Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by SSP Security, Kashmir, Sajad Khaliq, Additional Deputy Commissioner Aadil Fareed, IAS Probationer, Alfred Thomas, SP Headquarter, Umar Shah, Deputy Commandant (JR), K.Sahu, Joint Commissioner SMC, Syed Abu Qasim, SDPO Panthachowk Zohaib Ahmad, Superintending Engineer Hydraulic, Er. Anbreen Anjum, Superintending Engineer KPDC, Syed Ahmad Wani, SDM East, Zuber Ahmad, DySP Traffic Suhail Ahmad, Tehsildar Pantha Chowk, Muzamil Zamaan and senior Officers of District Administration, Police, SMC, Information, Fire & Emergency, Health, RTO, Traffic and other line Departments accompanied them.

During the visit, the DC and SMC Commissioner carried out an inspection of the Yatri Facilitation Centre and took stock of its readiness to manage and facilitate pilgrim-related services. They reviewed the facilities and infrastructure being established at the Transit Camp regarding KYC/RFID registration, accom-



modation, sanitation, drinking water supply, power availability, healthcare facilities, security, traffic management and other essential services.

On the occasion, the duo also inspected the readiness of Yatri Facilitation Center, which will handle critical services such as e-KYC verification, RFID card distribution and registration process to streamline the pilgrimage process, thereby ensuring streamlined movement, better crowd management and an efficient pilgrimage experience for the Yatri. They also held detailed interactions with Officers from various line Departments and comprehensively reviewed the preparedness measures undertaken to ensure a smooth, efficient and hassle-free experience for the pilgrims. They assessed the overall coordination mechanism, operational readiness and service delivery framework being put in place for the upcoming Yatra.

Emphasizing pilgrim comfort and convenience, the Officers stressed the need for close coordination among all Departments

to ensure timely completion of works and augmentation of essential services at the Transit Camp. They laid special focus on maintaining sanitation standards, ensuring availability of clean drinking water, uninterrupted power supply and other civic amenities, besides strengthening facilities at Langars (community kitchens) to provide wholesome meals to the pilgrims.

During the visit, the DC was informed that a sufficient number of bathrooms, urinals and mobile toilets have been established at the Transit Camp for the convenience of the Yatri. He was also apprised that, besides a dedicated water supply to the camp, standby water storage tanks with a cumulative capacity of 80,000 litres have been installed to cater to the needs of the visiting pilgrims at the halt camp.

On the occasion, the DC directed all line Departments to ensure that all arrangements and facilities are completed in a time bound manner to facilitate the smooth conduct of this year's Annual Yatra.

Motorists, Pedestrians Face Risk on Damaged Rambagh Road

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A badly damaged stretch of road near Ration Chat in the Old Rambagh area of Srinagar has become a cause of concern, with commuters and local people describing the route as dangerous and increasingly difficult to navigate.

The damaged portion of the main road is marked by uneven surface conditions and visible deterioration, creating inconvenience for motorists, pedestrians and two-wheeler riders.

People using the route said the condition of the road poses safety risks, particularly during peak traffic hours and adverse weather conditions when damaged surfaces become more hazardous. The road serves as an important link in the locality and witnesses regular movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

Locals and commuters urged the Roads and

Buildings (R&B) Department to take immediate notice of the deteriorating condition and undertake necessary repairs before the situation leads to accidents or further inconvenience. (KNT)

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

AIRPORTS
SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

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

- HIGHWAY STATUS**
- Sgr-Jammu highway - (OPEN)
 - Mughal Road - (OPEN)
 - Srinagar-Leh - (OPEN)

| PRAYERS | |
|---------|-------|
| FAJR | 3:46 |
| ZUHR | 12:27 |
| ASR | 5:24 |
| Magrib | 7:34 |
| ISHA | 9:10 |

From KO Archives

- 334 BC - The Macedonian army of Alexander the Great defeats Darius III of Persia in the Battle of the Granicus
- s1040- Battle of Dandanaqan: Tughril's Seljuk army defeats Ghaznavid force, near Merv (present-day Turkmenistan), brings about the fall of the Ghaznavid Empire
- 1059- Henri I crowns his son King Philip I (called the Amorous) of France
- 1493- King of France Charles VIII, King of the Romans Maximilian I and Archduke of Austria Philip I sign the Treaty of Senlis, ending hostilities between France and the Seventeen Provinces
- 1568- Battle of Heiligerlee, Groningen: Dutch rebels beat Spanish, thousands killed
- 1568- The Netherlands declares independence from Spain
- 1659 - France, England & Netherlands sign "Hedges Concerto" treaty
- 1746 - Russia and Austria sign treaty of cooperation
- 1762 - Sweden and Prussia sign the Treaty of Hamburg, reaffirming the status quo that existed before the Seven Years War
- 1799 - Napoleon makes statement in support of re-establishing Jerusalem for Jews
- 1892 - Dr Washington Sheffield invents the toothpaste tube

Mirwaiz Recalls Father's Peace Vision, Announces Eid Prayers at Eidgah

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Mirwaiz Umar Farooq on Friday invoked his late father's legacy of dialogue and non-violence, criticised restrictions on visiting Mazar-e-Shuhada to commemorate late leader and his fallen comrades, and announced that Eid congregational prayers would be held at Eidgah on May 27.

Addressing the Friday congregation at Srinagar's historic Jama Masjid, Mirwaiz said authorities had once again disallowed visits to Mazar-e-Shuhada at Eidgah.

"Today, as we gather at this historic pulpit of Jama Masjid, our hearts are filled with pain and disappointment that we were once again not allowed to visit Mazar-e-shuhada Eidgah to pay tribute to our beloved leaders and the martyrs," Mirwaiz told worshippers.

His remarks came on the 36th anniversary of the assassination of his father, Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq, a prominent religious and political figure, and the Hawal massacre of May 21, 1990, when dozens of civilians were killed during protests following his assassination.

Mirwaiz said that despite the passage of more than three decades, memories of those events remained deeply painful and unresolved.

"Thirty-six years have passed since the martyrdom of Shaheed-e-Millat Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq



and the Hawal massacre of 21 May 1990, yet the wounds remain fresh in our hearts," he said.

He described the past decades in Kashmir as marked by "tragedies, violence and loss," and said there had been little sense of closure for people affected by the conflict.

Referring to his father's political legacy, Mirwaiz said the elder leader believed that while India and Pakistan viewed Kashmir largely through the lens of territory and sovereignty, ordinary Kashmiris had borne the human cost of the dispute.

He said his father had argued that any lasting resolution required India and Pakistan to engage in dialogue while involving the people of Jammu and Kashmir and addressing their concerns and aspirations.

"As international commitments made over the issue were never im-

plemented and wars between neighbouring countries over the conflict got them nowhere, he strongly advocated that they talk to each other to find a way out," Mirwaiz said.

India and Pakistan, both nuclear-armed neighbours, claim Kashmir in full but rule it in part. The Himalayan region has remained a flashpoint between the two countries since their partition in 1947, leading to wars and decades of political tensions.

Mirwaiz said his father strongly opposed violence and saw dialogue as a means for resolving disputes and promoting peaceful coexistence.

"Late Mirwaiz strongly abhorred violence. He saw violence and force as weakness not strength," he said, adding that outreach and engagement, even with political adversaries, formed the basis of his father's approach.

Mirwaiz said the ideals of "resolution, peace, brotherhood, dignity and coexistence" had continued to guide him over the years and that he hoped to carry forward his father's vision.

He also announced that Eid prayers would be held at Eidgah on May 27 and said the Anjuman Auqaf Jama Masjid would issue a detailed programme regarding Eid congregational prayers in due course.

Authorities did not immediately comment on Mirwaiz's remarks or the restrictions he referred to regarding access to the martyrs' graveyard.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

مجلس

شاہ ہمدان

بمناسبت شش صد و شش ویکم (661) تقریب یوم وصال

وقت: نماز عصر (5:00 بجے) سے نماز عشاء تک

بمقام: خانقاہ حیدری، علی آباد عیشمقام، کشمیر

علاء کرام حضرت امیر کبیر کی سیرت اور افکار کے حوالے سے گفتگو فرمائیں گے اور بعد نماز مغرب اوراد فاتحہ کا خصوصی ورد بھی ہوگا۔

نوٹ: نشست کے بعد کھانے کا لنگر بھی تقسیم ہوگا۔ انشاء اللہ۔

بروز ہفتہ

جملہ رفقاء سے شرکت کی استدعا ہے

23 مئی 2026

خانقاہ حیدری، علی آباد، عیشمقام، کشمیر

Trump U-Turn Sparks NATO Confusion in Europe

Associated Press

Helsingborg (Sweden)- NATO allies and defence officials expressed bewilderment on Friday at US President Donald Trump's decision to send 5,000 American troops to Poland just weeks after he had ordered 5,000 troops to be pulled out of Europe.

dent Karol Nawrocki, whom Trump endorsed in elections last year.

The apparent change of mind came after weeks of conflicting statements from Trump and his administration about reducing — not increasing — the American military footprint in Europe. NATO allies have



“We just spent the better part of two weeks reacting to the first announcement. We don't know what this means either”

“It is confusing indeed, and not always easy to navigate,” Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard told reporters at a meeting she was hosting of her NATO counterparts, including US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

US defence officials were also confused. “We just spent the better part of two weeks reacting to the first announcement. We don't know what this means either,” said one of two officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military matters.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said, “I am pleased to announce that the United States will be sending an additional 5,000 Troops to Poland.” He said this was due to his strong ties with Polish Presi-

been blindsided, despite a US pledge to coordinate troop deployments.

“We're going to stay well-synchronized with our allies moving forward,” NATO's top military officer, US Lt Gen Alex Grynkeiwich, promised on Wednesday.

Earlier this month, the Trump administration has said it was reducing levels in Europe by about 5,000 troops, and US officials confirmed about 4,000 service members were no longer deploying to Poland.

That announcement came as Trump fumed over remarks by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who said that the US was being “humiliated” by the Iranian leadership and criticized what he called a lack of strategy in the war.

India to Host Quad Meet; West Asia, Indo-Pacific in Focus

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi- The foreign ministers of the Quad nations will deliberate on the fallout of the West Asia crisis and the prevailing situation in the Indo-Pacific at an India-hosted meeting on Tuesday.

The New Delhi meeting will be attended by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, and Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will preside over the meeting.

Rubio, Wong and Motegi are also expected to call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, besides holding separate bilateral meetings with Jaishankar.

“In keeping with the Quad vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, the ministers will build on discussions held in Washington DC on July 1, 2025,” the MEA said.

“They will exchange views on advancing Quad cooperation across priority areas, review progress on ongoing Quad initiatives, and reflect on recent developments in the Indo-Pacific region and other international issues of mutual concern,” it said.

The Quad, comprising India, the US, Australia and Japan, has emerged as a key grouping largely focusing on peace, security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

India is hosting the meeting in its capacity as the current chair of the coalition. There is no official word yet on the planned meeting.

People familiar with the preparations for the meeting said the Quad foreign ministers will deliberate on the pressing global challenges, including the conflicts in Ukraine and the West Asia, and will take stock of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, a region that has been witnessing increasing Chinese assertiveness.

Pak Army Chief Heads to Tehran as Iran-US Talks Advance

Trans Asia News

Tehran- Pakistan's army chief travelled to Tehran on Friday as a surge in regional diplomacy raised hopes that negotiations between Iran and the United States were gaining momentum, reducing the immediate risk of renewed conflict even as key disputes remained unresolved.

Field Marshal Asim Munir's visit, his second to Iran in little more than a month, comes amid intensified diplomatic activity involving Pakistan, Iran and the United States following a fragile ceasefire that halted weeks of military confrontation and reopened channels for negotiations. Security sources said Munir would meet senior Iranian officials to discuss Iran-U.S. talks, regional peace efforts and broader strategic matters. Iran's state-run Press TV, citing official news agency IRNA, also reported that Munir was en route to Tehran.

His visit follows several days of talks in Tehran by Pakistani Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, who has held meetings with senior Iranian leaders including President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi.

Sources said Naqvi met Araqchi twice to review proposals aimed at reducing tensions and narrowing differences between Tehran and Washington.

Pakistan has publicly remained cautious about the diplomatic engagements.

Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi earlier said he could “neither deny nor confirm” reports of a high-level Pakistani delegation travelling to Iran. However, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio appeared to acknowledge the outreach, saying he believed “Pakistanis will be travelling to Tehran” and suggesting there had been encouraging signs in ongoing discussions.

“I don't want to get ahead of it... I think we've made some progress,” Rubio said, while adding that “other options” remained available.

The flurry of diplomatic contacts has raised hopes that negotiations are advancing, reducing the immediate risk of renewed hostilities even as key disputes remain unresolved.

Recent reports from Iranian and regional media suggest indirect exchanges between Tehran



A man holding national flag at a Tehran square as Iran-US ceasefire holds- Photo WANA

and Washington have intensified after U.S. President Donald Trump extended a ceasefire that paused military escalation.

Trump earlier this week again raised the possibility of military action if negotiations failed. “I hope we don't have to do the war, but we may have to give them another big hit,” Trump told reporters, before offering a vague timeline for possible action.

Yet diplomatic signals in recent days have pointed toward cautious movement rather than imminent escalation.

Iranian officials have also attempted to frame negotiations not

nuclear threat posed by Tehran.

Diplomatic reports suggest discussions may now be expanding beyond traditional nuclear issues toward wider questions involving economic restrictions, regional security arrangements and mechanisms to sustain the ceasefire.

Still, major differences remain over uranium enrichment levels, international monitoring and the future of Iranian assets held abroad.

Analysts say three broad scenarios now appear possible: a comprehensive agreement involving reciprocal concessions,

“When discussing concessions, words must be chosen carefully. Iran is not asking for concessions from the United States. We are demanding our rights.”

as a process of seeking concessions but of restoring rights they argue have been denied for decades.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei rejected suggestions that Tehran was seeking political favours from Washington.

“When discussing concessions, words must be chosen carefully,” Baqaei said. “Iran is not asking for concessions from the United States. We are demanding our rights.”

Baqaei said Iran's demands included lifting sanctions, releasing frozen assets and ending restrictions affecting Iranian maritime activity, which Tehran has described as unlawful measures.

He also rejected claims surrounding Iran's nuclear programme, saying there was no

an interim arrangement extending the ceasefire while negotiations continue, or a breakdown in diplomacy leading to renewed confrontation.

For Pakistan, whose diplomatic engagement has accelerated in recent weeks, preventing another regional war carries both political and strategic significance. A wider conflict involving Iran could disrupt trade routes, alter security calculations and deepen instability across the region.

For now, however, diplomatic momentum appears to be overtaking battlefield rhetoric.

Whether that momentum can be converted into a lasting agreement remains the question facing negotiators in Tehran and Washington.

217 Indians Joined Russian Forces, 49 Killed in Conflict

New Delhi- The Centre on Friday told the Supreme Court that 217 Indian nationals had reportedly joined the Russian armed forces amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, and 49 have lost their lives in the conflict.

In a status report filed before the apex court, the Centre said pursuant to sustained diplomatic engagement undertaken by the government of India with the Russian Federation, 139 Indian nationals have already been released from the contracts they signed to join the Russian Army.

“Further, 49 Indian nationals are reported to have lost their lives in the conflict. Additionally, 6 Indian nationals have been confirmed missing by the Russian side, whereas the status of 23 individuals remains unknown and continues to be under active

Vipul M Pancholi.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, referred to the status report.

The report said in order to facilitate tracing of missing individuals and identification of mortal remains, DNA reports of the immediate family members of 21 individuals have been collected and transmitted to the Russian authorities with active facilitation by the government of India.

It said all such cases were being dealt with on utmost priority and were under continuous follow-up with the Russian authorities for resolution, while simultaneously keeping affected family informed about the developments.

The report said with respect



follow-up by the Embassy of India in Moscow with the Russian authorities,” the report said.

The status report was filed in a plea before the top court seeking directions to the Centre to take steps to facilitate the safe repatriation of 26 Indian citizens who have allegedly been detained in Russia and forced to fight in the ongoing war with Ukraine.

“It is submitted that as per the latest information available with the Ministry of External Affairs, approximately 217 Indian nationals had reportedly joined the Russian armed forces,” the status report said.

On Friday, the plea came up for hearing before a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and

to the 26 individuals referred to in the plea, as per the present status available with the authorities, 14 cases pertained to reported deaths.

It said 11 of them have been notified by the Russian authorities as “missing in action” or presently not in contact with their families.

It said one case pertained to imprisonment for eight years on molestation charges.

“It is submitted that immediately upon receipt of information regarding any Indian national joining the Russian Army, the Embassy has consistently taken up such matters with the Russian authorities to ensure safety, and secure early release and repatriation of the concerned individuals,” the Centre said.

Hindu Samiti Targets Non-local Street Vendors in Shimla

Press Trust Of India

Shimla : The Hindu Sangharsh Samiti on Friday launched a campaign against alleged illegal street vending by people from outside the state belonging to a specific community.

The Samiti submitted a memorandum to Governor Kavinder Gupta seeking an inquiry into their assets and sources of income.

Members of the organisation claimed that several vendors were operating without authorisation in different parts of the city and alleged that the situation was affecting law and order and local business.

Convener of the Hindu Sangharsh Samiti Vijay Sharma told reporters that many street vendors were allegedly carrying out business activities illegally and

“Members of the organisation claimed that several vendors were operating without authorisation in different parts of the city and alleged that the situation was affecting law and order and local business.”

that some municipal corporation employees had also faced threats.

He further alleged that certain individuals, possessing arms licenses, were operating in the city in an organised manner.

The organisation urged the Governor to order an investigation into the assets and sources of income of such individuals and said the administration must take stringent measures to maintain public order in the city.

NEWS MAKERS

Doctor Sedated, Raped Patient; Hospital Sealed

Press Trust Of India

Lucknow: A doctor at a private hospital here was accused of raping a female student after allegedly administering her a sedative injection during treatment, police said on Friday.

In the wake of the allegation, the state health minister directed that the hospital be sealed and the doctor's degree be confiscated.

The student had been admitted to Tejas Hospital on May 18 after suffering a health episode, officials said.

“According to the complaint, the doctor allegedly called the patient alone into the operation theatre during treatment and asked the female staff and the victim's father to step outside. The victim alleged that the doctor administered an intoxicating injection and sexually assaulted her,” Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Twinkle Jain told reporters.

The victim, who belongs to the Dalit community, told police that she realised what had happened after the effect of the in-

jection subsided, following which her family lodged a complaint.

Police said the accused, identified as Vijay Kumar Giri, a resident of Tambaur area in Sitapur district and proprietor of Tejas Hospital, was detained for questioning and the victim was sent for medical examination.

An FIR was registered against him under relevant sections of the BNS and the SC/ST Act at Bakshi Ka Talab police station, police said. The accused was later arrested and produced before a court, according to a police statement.

Officials said clothes allegedly worn by the accused at the time of the incident were seized as evidence.

Police further claimed that during questioning, the accused admitted to the crime.

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, who also holds the health portfolio, said on X that directions had been issued to seal Tejas Hospital in the Bakshi Ka Talab area here and suspend the medical licence of the accused doctor, Vijay Giri.

Umar Khalid Gets Three-day Interim Bail in UAPA Case

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi- The Delhi High Court on Friday granted three-day interim bail to activist Umar Khalid, who is in custody in a case under anti-terror law UAPA concerning the “larger conspiracy” behind the February 2020 riots in the city's north-eastern parts.

A bench of Justices Pratibha M Singh and Madhu Jain permitted Khalid to be released from June 1 to June 3 to enable him to meet his mother who has to undergo a surgery.

The bench noted that the Supreme Court rejected Khalid's regular bail plea on January 5 but granted him the reprieve by taking an “empathetic view.”

“Taking an empathetic view, this court is inclined to grant him interim bail for three



days from June 1 to June 3 to enable the appellant to spend time with his mother,” the court concluded.

ASGS V Raju, appearing for Delhi Police, argued that Khalid's mother has to undergo a minor surgery and he should be permitted to visit her with a police escort.

The court was hearing Khalid's appeal against the trial court's May 19 order that dismissed his interim bail plea.

He had urged the trial court to grant him 15 days' interim bail to attend a 40-day post-death ritual of his uncle and take care of his mother, who has to undergo a surgery.

The trial court, however, opined that attending the ceremony of his deceased uncle was “not that necessary” and that other family members were available to take care of his mother.

Khalid was booked under

the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for being one of the “masterminds” of the February 2020 riots that had left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured.

The violence had erupted during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Activists Sharjeel Imam, Khalid Saifi and former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor Tahir Hussain, among others, were also booked for their alleged involvement in the larger conspiracy case, which is being investigated by the Delhi Police's Special Cell.

On September 2, 2025, a bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Shalinder Kaur had denied bail to Imam, Khalid, Miran Haider and other accused in the case.

CS Reviews Traffic Decongestion Plan for Jammu, Srinagar Cities

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo chaired the 5th meeting of the Multi-Disciplinary Committee (MDC) on Traffic Management System to review the implementation of a comprehensive action plan aimed at easing traffic congestion and improving mobility in the twin cities of Jammu and Srinagar.

The Chief Secretary highlighted the significance of the recommendations put forth by the committee headed by the Principal Secretary, Home, and called for a time-bound action plan for their effective implementation.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed progress on identification and rectification of black spots, widening of major roads, creation of rotaries and junction improvements in both cities.

He stressed the need for clearly identifying funding sources for all the proposed works, noting that these interventions are aimed at providing much-needed relief to the general public by improving ease of mobility in the twin cities and other urban centres of the UT. He directed the Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD) to take up the matter with the Finance Department to ensure smooth and timely execution of these projects across Jammu and Kashmir.



During the review, the Chief Secretary took a detailed appraisal of the measures undertaken by different departments for decongestion of major traffic corridors, augmentation of parking facilities, improvement of road infrastructure, streamlining of public transport and strengthening of intelligent traffic management systems in both the capital cities.

It was informed that several diversion routes have already been identified and operationalised in Jammu and Srinagar to reduce congestion on critical stretches and ensure smoother vehicular movement. In Jammu city, 10 diversion routes are being utilized for traffic decongestion. Similarly, five diversion routes have been made operational in Srinagar to reduce pressure on heavily congested city stretches.

The meeting was informed that dedicated e-rickshaw zones have also been notified to regulate traffic movement and improve last-mile connectivity. Six e-rickshaw zones have been established in Jammu while multiple operational, free and restricted zones have been identified in Srinagar city with some already implemented and others under consideration in consultation with stakeholders.

Reviewing traffic regulation measures, the Chief Secretary was apprised that one-way traffic systems have been introduced at several key locations in both cities, while proposals for additional no-vehicle zones in crowded commercial and hospital areas are under implementation after consultations with stakeholders and local authorities.

The meeting further discussed the implementation of Smart City Command and Control Response Systems (SCCoRS), installation of Intelligent Traffic Management Systems (ITMS), creation of Automated Traffic Management System (ATMS) junctions and procurement of modern enforcement and surveillance equipment.

It was informed that Traffic Police and allied departments have procured motorcycles, interceptor vehicles, cranes, body-worn cameras and ambulances for better traffic enforcement and emergency response.

In order to improve road safety and enforce traffic discipline, action has also been taken against habitual offenders across Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting was informed that action has been initiated against more than 39,000 habitual of-

fenders, resulting in suspension and cancellation of driving licences and registration certificates besides seizure and black-listing of vehicles.

It was informed that several projects including Canal Head-Bohri, Jewel-Canal Head and Satwari-Belicharana road stretches in Jammu have already been completed, while other projects are at different stages of execution. In Srinagar, widening proposals and road safety interventions are under progress, including installation of metal beam crash barriers and preparation of DPRs for identified black spots.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed the status of no-parking zones, IT-based parking systems, on-street parking management, parking policy formulation and development of dedicated vending zones. It was informed that GIS-based mapping for parking management is underway in Srinagar while several parking sites in Jammu have already been tendered and partially operationalised.

The meeting also discussed regulation of banquet halls and schools lacking adequate parking facilities. The Municipal Commissioners informed that notices have been issued to non-compliant establishments and parking management plans are being enforced to prevent road-side congestion.

Land Grabbers Have No Religion, Must Face Action: Sunil Sharma

JAMMU: Leader of Opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Sunil Sharma on Friday said land grabbers have "no religion" and accused certain political leaders of attempting to shield illegal encroachments while diverting attention from governance issues. Sunil Sharma said those involved in illegal land activities should not be linked to any community, adding that action against encroachment was being resisted by some vested interests.

"Land grabbers have no religion. Those who do illegal work should be treated as non-religious. Some leaders who have been in power for a long time are worried because this action will reach their homes," Sharma said, as per KNS.

He alleged that large tracts of forest and government land had been encroached upon in Jammu and Kashmir over the years and claimed that "big buildings" belonging to former chief ministers and ministers had come up on such land.

Referring to Bathindi, BJP senior leader alleged that several constructions linked to prominent political figures were on forest or state land, and said details were available in public domain. He said action against such encroachments was being resisted as it was affecting influential people.

Sunil Sharma also alleged that some political parties were attempting to communalise the issue of land encroachment, which he said was a governance matter and not linked to any community.

Targeting opposition parties, he accused them of changing political positions frequently and questioned their consistency on key issues.

He also criticised the previous and present administrations in Jammu and Kashmir over basic public services, alleging that residents were facing difficulties in supply of electricity, drinking water, roads and healthcare facilities. (Observer News Service)

Those Questioning Congress-NC Alliance Have Lost Their Positions: Karra

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Congress chief Tariq Haameed Karra on Friday described the internal criticism over the party's alliance with the National Conference (NC) as a "frustrated rant" by those who have lost their positions, asserting that the decision was taken in the larger interest of the India Bloc and with the authority of the central leadership.

"It is far from reality that this is a wrong alliance. Most party leaders initially gave their opinion against it, but later empowered the central leadership to take the final decision. To question it now is to demean the decision of the Congress president and Rahul Gandhi ji," Karra told KNS.

He recalled that senior leaders K C Venugopal, Mallikarjun Kharge and he himself had met NC president Dr. Farooq Abdullah to finalise the pre-poll pact. He said the public has acknowledged that if not for the intervention of Rahul Gandhi and Kharge, the results could have been different for both parties.

On the demand for disciplinary action against those speaking publicly against the alliance, Congress JK chief said, "Not yet. If any initiative is taken, you will come to know."

On the recent demolition drive in Jammu, Karra demanded rehabilitation and compensation for affected families, questioning, "If the forest minister himself said it was not forest land, then who ordered the demolition? Under whose orders did the police reach?" (Observer News Service)

Minister Sakeena Reviews Education, Health Sector Scenario in Budgam

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo held an extensive review of the education and health sector scenario in Budgam constituency in a meeting at Civil Secretariat here.

The meeting was attended by MLA Budgam, Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi; Special Secretaries of School Education, Higher Education and Social Welfare departments, Director School Education Kashmir, Director Health Services Kashmir, Director Colleges, Director Planning/Director Finance of School Education, Higher Education and Social Welfare departments, Additional Secretaries of all concerned departments, CMO Srinagar, CMO Budgam, CEO Budgam and other concerned officers.

During the review meeting, the Minister took stock of the progress achieved under various schemes and assessed the status of infrastructure development works being executed across the constituency. She directed the officials to maintain close coordination and ensure that projects are completed within stipulated timelines without compromising quality standards.

Regarding Government Degree College, Soibugh, the Minister called for expediting the ongoing



works so that the project is completed timely and dedicated for public use, on all ongoing developmental projects to ensure timely public benefit.

While reviewing other developmental aspects of the Budgam constituency, the Minister directed the concerned officers to prioritise all the issues raised by concerned public representative and take immediate steps for their timely redressal. She also stressed on resolving all the bottlenecks to make satellite campus of Maulana Azad National Urdu University functional at permanent campus.

While reviewing the healthcare sector, the Minister sought detailed functioning of health institutions, availability of medical staff, medicines, diagnostic facilities and patient care services in the constituency. She instructed the concerned authorities to address gaps on priority and ensure that healthcare institutions remain fully equipped to cater to the needs of the public.

She directed the health department for rationalisation of staff in health institutions of cities and towns to fill gaps in rural and peripheral areas.

While reviewing other aspects related to health sector, the Minister directed the officers of health department that diagnostic facilities like MRI, CT Scan, USG should be made functional 24x7 in hospitals and GMCs wherever these are available. She also directed the health department to submit a report regarding these facilities availed by patients beyond routine working hours in last one month.

Emphasizing the government's commitment towards strengthening public service delivery, the Minister said that education and healthcare remain priority sectors of the present administration and sustained efforts are being made to improve facilities at the grassroots level. She reiterated that people in both urban and rural areas must receive better educational opportunities and accessible healthcare services.

J&K Biodiversity Council Celebrates International Day for Biological Diversity

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir Biodiversity Council celebrated International Day for Biological Diversity today at Dachigam, highlighting the Union Territory's rich ecological heritage and reinforcing the global call to "Act Locally, Impact Globally."

The event was attended by Chief Guest Sheetal Nanda, Commissioner Secretary Forests, Ecology and Environment; Sarvesh Rai, PCCF/HoFF J&K and Chairman J&K Biodiversity Council; Chaturbhuj Bahera PCCF/CWW/Director SFRI and Member Secretary J&K Biodiversity Council; Irfan Rasool Wani, CCF Kashmir; Tawheed Ahmad Deva, Regional Wildlife Warden Kashmir; Saurabh Sharma CF Srinagar; Irfan Ali Shah, CF North and Professor Anzar Khuroo Member Biodiversity Council from Kashmir University, alongside Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs), Range Officers (ROs) and members of various Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) from across J&K.

In her address, Sheetal Nanda told the audience that the International Day for Biological Diversity serves as a vital reminder of humanity's deep dependence on the natural world. "Humans have a core responsibility to conserve biodiversity because our very survival depends on



it," she stated. The Commissioner Secretary emphasized the critical need to balance infrastructure development with environmental preservation, noting that economic growth must not come at the cost of nature. On this occasion, she directed the Council to prepare a comprehensive catalog of the region's flora, fauna and avian species and advocated creation of ex-situ (off-site) conservation areas to protect the vulnerable species.

Sarvesh Rai outlined J&K's unique ecological footprint, noting that 48% of the region's geographic area is under forest cover, with 25% of that dedicated to Wildlife Protected Areas. He highlighted the vital ecosystem services that forests provide, such as water purification and pollination and pointed out the economic significance

of the region's Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs).

"Our local BMCs have successfully collected ₹25 crore over the last three years," Rai revealed while advocating the sustainable harvesting of medicinal plants to safeguard them for future generations. He also shared positive conservation news, noting that populations of iconic species like the Hangul, Brown Bear, Black Bear and Tiger are steadily bouncing back.

Earlier, Chaturbhuj Bahera highlighted that biodiversity extends far beyond dense forests to include agricultural and cultural diversity, which must be protected to ensure future food security. He spoke on the root causes of human-animal conflict and emphasized the crucial role played by the 2,490 active BMCs across Jammu and Kashmir in documenting the local resources.

Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan Intensified Across Budgam

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: District Administration Budgam has intensified activities under the 100-Day Intensive Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan across the district with an aim to create mass awareness against drug abuse and promote a healthy, drug-free society.

As part of the ongoing campaign, a series of awareness and outreach programmes are being organised in educational institutions and public spaces involving active participation of students, teachers, officials and community members. Various departments including Education, Health, Social Welfare, Police, Youth Services & Sports and other stakeholder agen-

cies are jointly conducting awareness drives to sensitise youth about the harmful effects of substance abuse.

In continuation of the campaign activities, essay competition and debate programmes were today conducted at Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Budgam under the National Mental Health & Behaviour Awareness (NMBA) programme. Students participated enthusiastically and expressed their ideas and awareness on important social and behavioural issues through creative writing and engaging discussions.

The activities were aimed at promoting awareness, critical thinking, effective communication and positive

behavioural values among students while encouraging them to stay away from substance abuse and other harmful practices. Teachers and organisers appreciated the active involvement, creativity and confidence displayed by the participants during the programme.

Officials stated that the 100-day campaign focuses on preventive awareness, behavioural change, counselling support and community participation to effectively address the growing concern of drug abuse. Awareness rallies, seminars, interactive sessions and youth engagement programmes are also being organised across different areas of the district under the initiative.

Illegal Construction Razed in Sonamarg

Observer News Service

GANDERBAL: The Sonamarg Development Authority (SDA) on Friday carried out a demolition drive in Sonamarg during which an allegedly unauthorized structure was demolished following directions from the Chief Executive Officer of the authority.

Officials in the authority said the action was undertaken as part of enforcement measures against illegal construction within the tourist resort.

According to sources, the individual concerned had earlier also erected an unauthorized structure, following which the Sonamarg Development

Authority had served a notice directing compliance with building regulations.

Officials alleged that despite the notice, the person continued with the construction in violation of the authority's directions, prompting demolition action.

The drive was conducted under the supervision of officials of the authority as part of efforts aimed at regulating construction activity in the ecologically sensitive tourist destination.

The demolition has meanwhile triggered discussion among sections of local stakeholders and general public regarding broader enforcement against alleged unauthorized commercial structures in Sonamarg. (KNT)

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ANANTNAG

Subject:- Extention Notice.

Due to poor response to this eNIT No. 082 of 2026 dated 07.05.2026 issued under endorsement No. MCANG/TAX/2026/4512-16 dated 07.05.2026, the date for submission/ opening of bids is hereby extended as under;

| S.No | Online Sequence of Activities | Date and Time |
|------|--|------------------------------------|
| 01. | Bid Submission End date | 25.05.2026 at 1200 Hrs |
| 02. | Date and time of Opening of Technical Bid (online) | 25.05.2026 at 1400 Hrs |
| 03. | Date & Time of opening of financial bid | After evaluation of technical bids |

All other terms and conditions shall remain same

No:- MC/ANG/Tax/25/ 4955-57
Dated:- 22/05/2026

DIPK-NB-579-26
DT: 22/05/2026

Chief Executive Officer
Municipal Council Anantnag

KASHMIR OBSERVER®

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America's Fear of Losing Itself

As immigration and identity politics dominate American public life, the Great Replacement Theory has moved from the fringes into mainstream political debate.



Wajahat Qazi



What sort of country America is to be, its character and nature are to be, who to let in, and how, must be determined by Americans themselves, and not by the elite, whether through ideological superimposition or policy obscurantism. But of critical import and significance is the hook and the peg for the American identity, or Americanness, in the 21st century.

KO VIEW
Reality Check

A video shared by a visitor has sparked a debate over growing neglect and deteriorating conditions at popular tourist sites in Kashmir.

The clip shows the gondola base at Gulmarg, where long queues stretched along a worn meadow path. Her message to future travellers was simple and clear: look closely before choosing where to go.

That one clip has held a mirror to a place that often shines brightest in brochures.

Gulmarg stands as one of Kashmir's most visited destinations. Snow, pine trees, and mountain views form a picture that draws people in large numbers. Once visitors arrive, the experience depends on how well the place handles the weight of that attention.

A destination is never only about what the eye sees. It also depends on what the feet feel while waiting, what the mind thinks while standing in a queue, and how the day unfolds beyond the photograph.

There is an old saying that a beautiful face still needs steady hands to hold it together. Gulmarg today shows what that means in practice.

Tourism works through many small links that stay out of sight when things go well. Transport at entry points, ticket counters, crowd movement, cleanliness, and basic coordination decide how smooth or strained a visit becomes.

When visitor numbers rise sharply, these links face pressure at the same time.

The gondola station now shows that pressure clearly, where movement slows and patience becomes part of the journey.

Kashmir's tourism story has long rested on a simple promise: a place of calm, beauty, and escape from noise.

That promise stays strong in image, while real experience depends on daily care that often goes unseen. A river can look calm on the surface, even as strong currents move underneath.

Many hands shape this system. Travel operators design attractive packages, hotels work around peak seasons, local workers depend on short bursts of income, and public offices highlight rising visitor numbers as success.

All parts move with their own pace and pulse, while the visitor experience depends on how well these rhythms align at the same moment.

The digital age has changed how such moments travel. A single video can now carry more weight than long campaigns. What a visitor records often reaches farther than what official messaging can hold back.

Beyond itineraries and guides, a place now speaks through phones held by those who walk through it.

This new reality brings a clear lesson: a destination earns trust through consistent care. Good roads, smooth queues, clean surroundings, and well planned movement matter as much as the landscape itself.

Even the finest garden, as they say, needs constant attention.

At the end of the day, a place is remembered when what people see matches what they are told. When both match, the place grows stronger with time.

The 'Great Replacement Theory' (GRT), an acronym of which is the eminent Tucker Carlson, postulates that white people, especially in the United States, are being replaced.

In the theory's schemata, there is an elimination game going on where whites are being outnumbered and thereby occluded.

In this 'elimination game' by numbers, immigration stands implicated.

Immigration and 'schemes' like Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are usually held to be the handmaidens of this conspiracy.

On the face of it, this sounds like a conspiracy theory. But probe a little deeper, and some degree of plausibility to and about the theory can be discerned.

The question is: if there is some merit to the GRT, who is behind it? What explains it?

The answer to this question merits a wee digression. In democracies, where power is diffuse and where there are checks and balances on power and its exercise, a physical cabal of people usually cannot dictate public policy.

It's so because a democratic mandate lies with and is given by people to their representatives, and debate, discussion, and transparency in the formulation and execution of public policy are essential.

Given this, how can a certain policy paradigm be made dominant and then legitimate in the eyes of the people?

There are multiple prongs to this issue that intersect, and the major one is ideological dominance presented as an ideational paradigm.

The corollary to this is 'manufacturing consent' by the ecosystem and ecology of the dominant ideological matrix. The follow up is creating a 'discursive mountain', so to speak, around the ideology and discrediting alternatives.

Lo and behold, a given ideologically laden and inflected policy becomes the dominant paradigm that is difficult to displace from a Kuhnian perspective.

In the context of America, what has been this dominant ideological matrix?

The answer is globalism.

This is well known and understood, but the deeper and more relevant question is: what are the wellsprings of globalism?

Multiple ideological and philosophical strands conjoin together to feed into the matrix of globalism. The predominant one is Francis Fukuyama's 'End of History and the Last Man' thesis.

Roughly and reductively, the theory, written in the aftermath of the Cold War, postulated that liberal democracy had triumphed over all other systems of thought, politics, and practice, and from its incubus had emerged the 'last man'.

To impart gravitas, elan, and legitimacy to his

thesis, Fukuyama employed the 'Hegelian dialectic' and the works of Alexandre Kojève.

To hark to the 'last man' formulation in Fukuyama's thesis, it was postulated and implied that in a liberal democratic milieu, the 'last man' would gain full acceptance. The milieu would be colour blind, race blind, ethnicity blind, and so on.

This was to be the apogee of modernity which had climaxed in the US. Once the country adopted it as the dominant paradigm, the rest of the world would follow too.

If then history had ended in the US and the 'last man' was born there, by virtue of osmosis, mimicry, and policy pushes, the entire world would be populated by 'last men'.

If this formulation holds, then the white people of the United States would no longer be either the power structure of the country, nor would they be prominent in the country's social and public firmament. They too could jostle and jockey for space in the field open to 'last men'.

In the crucible of this ideological superstructure, identity politics, race, and immigration became central, assuming precedence in the process.

Before proceeding further, I must here interject with a disclaimer: I speak as a romantic who believes that humans are human and this human-ness is imbued by God.

Any human accretion about who humans can be are constructions determined by history, culture, and 'habitus'. But this surely and certainly does not mean culture is an unimportant variable and a construct that can either be altered or made to vanish through social engineering.

Culture and 'patterns thereof', institutionalized by daily practices, habits of thought, and so on, are essential elements and features of any human grouping. Take away culture, and what is left is a utilitarian

bundle or mass that seeks pleasure maximization and pain avoidance, the apogee of the 'last man'?

This denudes humans of meaning and solidarity.

This is what happened in the United States, where the white superstructure of the country felt threatened, outnumbered, and even fearful.

And this is probably what led to the white ethnonationalist backlash against globalism in the country.

If this constitutes the grist to the mill of the GRT, then there would be natural takers for the theory.

The question now is: should the GRT be obviated? No neat answers lend themselves here.

The 47th president of the United States is employing policy levers to check immigration into the country and leaving his ingress on the nature and tenor of America.

How this pans out and denoues remains in the mists of the future.

What sort of country America is to be, its character and nature are to be, who to let in, and how, must be determined by Americans themselves, and not by the elite, whether through ideological superimposition or policy obscurantism.

But of critical import and significance is the hook and the peg for the American identity, or Americanness, in the 21st century.

The nature of this peg, whether it is too wide and free for all or too narrow and too exclusive in scope, will have a deep historical import and impact.

The time for both bold action and treading delicately is now.

The author holds a Distinction in International Relations from the University of Aberdeen and combines scholarship with real-world engagement. He has worked in academia and media, including as Associate Editor at Kashmir Observer.

Chinar at the Crossroads

Despite legal protection and cultural status, Chinar trees continue to be cut, pruned, or damaged during infrastructure works.



Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

Recent weeks have brought unsettling scenes from several parts of Kashmir.

Chinar trees stand cut, pruned into hollow forms, or pressed tightly against fresh layers of concrete and bitumen along expanding road corridors.

Baramulla to Kupwara, Srinagar to Bandipora, Ganapora Kralgund in Handwara, Pulwama near the district court stretch, Thokerpora toward Pakherpora, Lalbazar near G D Goenka School, all present similar images of changing roadside landscapes.

The language used in field discussions often circles around pruning, widening, development, while the trees themselves show signs of deep stress.

I have moved through these stretches over recent weeks, speaking with engineers, workers, and local residents while observing the condition of mature Chinars.

The design becomes predictable in place after place: branches removed in ways that halt further growth, soil around trunks hardened by construction material, and road edges shifting closer to root systems that once had breathing space.

The Chinar, known locally as Booen, holds

a central place in Kashmir's identity. The tree, identified botanically as *Platanus orientalis*, carries formal recognition as the Royal Tree under Section 36 of the Jammu and Kashmir Land Revenue Act 1939 (Samvat 1996).

That legal recognition remains part of the region's governance framework after many decades of administrative change.

Historical accounts trace the Chinar's journey from central Iran into Kashmir's landscape. One of the oldest known specimens, around 650 years in age, stands in Chattergam in Budgam district. Local tradition links its planting to Syed Qasim Shah Hamadani (RA), a Central Asian preacher.

Mughal-era governors later expanded plantation work, placing Chinars within gardens at Shalimar, Nishat, Achabal, and other sites that still define Srinagar's visual identity.

Successive administrations continued plantation efforts.

Pathan and Sikh periods carried forward tree planting practices. Dogra rule between 1846 and 1947 expanded plantation across the valley, including thousands of Chinars.

Maharaja Hari Singh is associated with large plantation drives, and one notable tree stands within the grounds of the Lalit Grand Palace in Srinagar, a site linked to royal residence and the 1947 visit of Mahatma Gandhi during his stay with the Maharaja's family.

The ecological role of these trees extends far beyond symbolism.

Reduced Chinar cover has altered nesting spaces for birds that depend on mature canopy systems. Species such as the Tawny Owl, subspecies *Strix aluco biddulphi*, found in the western Himalayan belt, depend on such habitats. The Kashmir Flycatcher, *Ficedula subrubra*,

Road expansion projects have become a major point of pressure on this tree cover. The Baramulla-Kupwara corridor shows multiple instances of Chinar removal. Srinagar-Bandipora stretches display heavy pruning patterns where trees remain standing yet lose structural continuity for future growth.

which breeds only in this valley, relies on stable tree cover during its life cycle.

Loss of canopy space redefines breeding conditions and shifts seasonal bird movement patterns across the region.

Road expansion projects have become a major point of pressure on this tree cover. The Baramulla-Kupwara corridor shows multiple instances of Chinar removal. Srinagar-Bandipora stretches display heavy pruning patterns where trees remain standing yet lose structural continuity for future growth.

Expansion work often proceeds under the language of mobility and access, while roadside ecosystems absorb long-term change.

Field observations point toward gaps in transplantation use. Forestry experts, SKUAST-K scientists, and floriculture teams hold technical capacity for moving mature trees. A past example from Foreshore Road in Srinagar shows a forty-year-old Chinar successfully shifted to Char Chinar on Dal Lake.

The operation involved coordination between forest authorities, SKUAST-Srinagar, and the Lakes Conservation Management Authority, and the tree continues to grow today.

Constitutional interpretation by the Supreme Court in *M.K. Ranjitsinh vs Union of India* (2024 INSC 280) connects environmental protection with Article 48A, Article 51A(g), and Article 21. The judgment links life with access to clean environmental conditions and places forest protection within constitutional governance.

That reading situates tree protection within the core structure of public duty and state planning.

Ground conditions in Ganderbal show additional pressure points. Plans linked to the Semi Ring Road from Manigam to Nagbal include proposals involving 58 Chinar trees, with some pruning already visible. Near Qamariya Park in Ganderbal town, stone tiling and concrete layers extend close to multiple trunks.

Root systems depend on open soil space for water and air movement, and hardened surfaces place sustained stress on long-term survival.

Large-scale data from highway development adds scale to this picture. National Highways Authority of India records show removal of over 1.10 lakh private trees, including apple, walnut, mulberry, and Chinar, during Srinagar Ring Road construction between 2018 and 2021. The valuation of this tree loss stands at Rs 13.76 crore.

Compensation frameworks under T.N. Godavarman vs Union of India include plantation of ten trees per tree removed, while field verification of plantation sites remains a complex task across districts.

Canal Road Rawalpora in Srinagar presents

another example of competing pressures.

Around ninety mulberry trees faced removal during widening work. Public engagement and follow-up discussions altered that course. Current surface work shows tiling and concrete close to tree bases, while trunk zones remain under attention from technical officers who reviewed earlier concerns raised through public reporting.

National Green Tribunal guidance issued in 2021 sets a clear design principle: a one-metre de-concretised zone around tree trunks supports root respiration and water movement. Several construction stretches still show limited space around mature trees, including Chinars in Ganderbal town.

Public Works Department divisions currently function across multiple projects where environmental expertise sits outside core engineering teams. Stronger integration of ecological specialists within tender design could align construction planning with tree protection.

I return often to a simple thought while moving through these landscapes. Roads, bridges, and widening corridors speak of movement and access. Chinars speak of continuity, memory, and time layered through centuries of change.

When these trees stand reduced or removed, the landscape loses a living archive that once marked seasons, gatherings, and shared space across generations.

The author is an environmental activist and policy analyst based in Kashmir. He chairs the J&K Climate Action Group and founded the Jammu & Kashmir RTI Movement.

Between Bites and Belonging

Communities find themselves divided between compassion for animals and fear for safety.



Dr. Shahid Amin

A few days ago, my elder brother Dr. Farooq Ahmad Mir called me. He lives in Russia now, holding a respected position there, though his heart remains rooted in his birthplace Pahalgam.

Our conversations usually drift toward the beauty of our homeland, the culture we grew up inside, and the opportunities we wish for Kashmiri youth.

But this time, the tone shifted, and we talked about dogs.

A dog had recently attacked a pedestrian in Kashmir. Locals, gripped by fear and anger, killed the animal on the spot. The episode splintered public opinion.

Some mourned the creature and condemned the violence, others asked a harder question: what should ordinary people do when a dog turns violent and human life hangs in the balance?

The collision between compassion and survival had arrived on our streets, and nobody seemed prepared.

Dogs and humans have walked together for millennia. We bred them for protection, herding, hunting, and companionship. They looked to us for food, shelter, and affection.

That bond has enriched both species, and research across societies confirms its emotional depth. Street dogs, though, sit outside this compact.

Their numbers have swelled in many regions, and the relationship has tipped toward conflict. Public safety, health, animal welfare, and simple daily peace all feel the strain.

Kashmir is living this tension in real time. Newspapers and social media fill with reports of children bitten on their way to school, elderly citizens chased during morning walks, and pedestrians altering their routes to avoid certain streets.



Stray dog populations have grown so large in several localities that fear has become a fixture of daily life.

The situation grows more volatile when activists lodge complaints against locals who react during attacks. Protecting animals holds real moral weight, and cruelty toward them should always draw condemnation.

But those who file complaints against frightened residents might stop and imagine their own child cornered by an aggressive pack, their own parent unable to flee. Would they expect bystanders to stand still?

Fear triggers instinct, and when society punishes people who step in to save a child or shield a vulnerable person, hesitation sets in. People begin calculating the legal risk of helping. They weigh social backlash against a scream for help. That hesitation corrodes the social fabric itself.

The answer lies in balanced, mature, long-term planning rather than emotional reactions alone.

Dr. Farooq shared a useful comparison during our call. Russian cities rarely show stray dogs wandering roads. Municipal systems manage the population through shelters, vaccination drives, sterilization programs, and strict enforcement. Russians love dogs deeply,

but they grasp the importance of discipline, responsibility, and public safety. Other nations have struck similar balances.

The World Health Organization puts the global stray dog population above 200 million. The Netherlands became one of the first countries to eliminate the problem entirely, using the CNVR model — Collect, Neuter, Vaccinate, and Return — a nationwide, government-funded sterilization and vaccination program that animal welfare groups rank among the most effective humane approaches. Sweden, Norway, and Turkey have advanced comparable efforts.

India faces a different scale. Studies place the stray dog population in the millions, and the toll shows in dog bites, rabies cases, public safety failures, and abandoned animals. Kashmir shares these burdens.

Poor waste management draws dogs to populated areas. Sparse sterilization programs let populations multiply, inadequate shelters leave animals on streets, and local administrations work with thin resources and patchy implementation.

Public emotion has split into two camps. One side speaks about animal rights, the other speaks about human safety. Both arguments hold water.

Dogs feel hunger, pain, fear, and attachment. Many strays turn aggressive because of harsh environments, starvation, disease, abuse, or neglect rather than innate malice. That truth stands.

But it also fails to erase the trauma of a child mauled on a school path, a family terrified inside their own lane, and a tourist fleeing a pack near Dal Lake.

Society cannot dismiss the suffering of victims. The path forward demands a middle ground.

Animal welfare activists possess real influence here. Rather than filing complaints against terrified residents, they could redirect that energy toward pressing governments and policymakers into building lasting systems.

Meaningful sterilization programs, proper shelters, municipal coordination, and veterinary partnerships would ease both animal suffering and human fear. Governments must recognize that this crisis touches public confidence, urban safety, tourism revenue, and social harmony.

Kashmir, celebrated worldwide for its beauty and warmth, risks becoming a place where parents keep children inside and visitors watch their step.

The Supreme Court of India has now entered the fray.

The Court ruled that citizens hold a fundamental right under Article 21 to live and move freely without fear of stray animal attacks. It criticized years of official inaction, blaming poor sterilization and control measures for serious human suffering, including attacks on children and tourists.

To force accountability, the Court directed High Courts nationwide to monitor implementation actively and warned officials that negligence could bring disciplinary action, contempt proceedings, and compensation liability.

The same Bench noted that where stray dog populations reach alarming levels and repeated attacks endanger public safety, authorities may adopt legally permissible measures after proper veterinary assessment and in strict compliance with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and the Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023.

Euthanasia remains an option in exceptional cases involving rabid, incurably ill, or demonstrably dangerous dogs, with the primary goal of protecting human life.

Authorities must move past temporary fixes and emotional statements. Serious planning, adequate funding, and coordination among veterinarians, NGOs, municipalities, and local communities form the backbone of any real solution.

Policies should shield animals from cruelty while giving citizens confidence on their own streets. Schools can teach responsibility, while media houses can replace sensationalism with balanced discussion.

The moment calls for wisdom, balance, and collective responsibility.

Dr. Farooq ended the call on a thoughtful note: civilized societies solve problems through systems, planning, empathy, and cooperation rather than anger alone.

Kashmir, and any region wrestling with this crisis, would do well to listen.

— The author is Associate Professor, Department of Management, President of the Institution's Innovation Council, IIM Gwalior, and an IIMA (FDP) alumnus. He can be reached at dr.shahidamin15@gmail.com.

Copper Pages of Empire

Medieval South Indian history re-emerges in modern global debates on cultural justice and museum ethics.



Muskan Shafi Malik

A committee of global experts assembled during 1976 in Venice under UNESCO Stewardship to confront a rising concern in world heritage circles: the movement of cultural property taken from homelands during colonial expansion and unlawful trade.

That gathering gave life to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation, widely known as ICPRCP, a forum that soon became central to global discussions on cultural return and historical repair.

India entered this evolving international framework in 2012, opening a long diplomatic and scholarly engagement with museums, archives, and governments holding Indian antiquities.

Since that turning point, around 1400 antiquities returned to Indian soil, each object reopening chapters of memory once dispersed through colonial routes of collection and exchange.

A key focus during the 24th session of ICPRCP drew attention to twenty-one artefacts linked to the Chola world, associated with the reign of rulers such as Rajaraja Chola and Rajendra Chola.

These discussions brought medieval South Indian history into contemporary diplomatic rooms, placing the Chola past within present global cultural conversations.

A defining moment came during a ceremony in the Netherlands involving Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, where the 11th-century Anaimangalam copper plates returned to India after a fourteen-year diplomatic engagement.

The handover marked a significant moment in cultural diplomacy, opening a new



chapter in the long effort to restore dispersed heritage materials to their places of origin.

The Chola dynasty rose between the ninth and thirteenth centuries from the fertile Kaveri delta in present-day Tamil Nadu, building one of the most influential political formations in South Asian history.

Kings such as Rajaraja Chola I and Rajendra Chola I expanded royal authority through naval strength, administrative depth, and far-reaching trade relations that linked South India with island and mainland Southeast Asia.

Historian Burton Stein described the Chola state as "one of the most durable and expansive political systems of premodern South Asia," a formulation that continues to guide

scholarly interpretation of this imperial formation.

The Anaimangalam copper plates stand as a remarkable archival object from this world.

Issued during the early eleventh century under Chola authority, the set contains twenty-one copper sheets bound by copper rings, with a royal tiger emblem engraved as dynastic insignia. Text appears in Sanskrit and Tamil, written using Grantha script for Sanskrit portions, revealing a multilingual administrative culture that supported imperial governance.

Tamil inscriptions record detailed information about a land endowment involving twenty-six villages around Anaimangalam

in present-day Tamil Nadu. Sanskrit sections present royal genealogy and imperial legitimacy, providing a layered view of political authority and administrative practice.

Historians continue to study these plates for insight into taxation systems, agricultural organisation, and regional administration within Chola governance structures.

Historical research linked to Leiden University and Dutch colonial archives traces the movement of these plates to the seventeenth century, when the Dutch East India Company operated trading and administrative networks in South Asia. Evidence suggests removal from Nagapattinam between 1687 and 1700, later entering European collections.

Provenance studies later described the situation as an "involuntary loss of possession," setting the stage for their eventual return.

Scholarly interpretation places such inscriptions within wider cultural memory systems. Historian Romila Thapar has described inscriptions as "windows into the social and economic life of their times," a perspective clearly visible in the Anaimangalam record, where governance, economy, and royal ideology appear on a single material surface.

Global voices have also stressed the importance of returning displaced heritage. Historian William Dalrymple has argued that "objects carry memory, identity, and historical continuity," a view frequently cited in debates on restitution and museum ethics.

The return of the copper plates aligns with this intellectual current, bringing archival heritage back into its geographic and cultural landscape.

Chola maritime activity extended through the Bay of Bengal to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, linking ports such as Nagapattinam with trading hubs associated with the Srivijaya kingdom.

These connections reveal a world where diplomacy, commerce, and cultural exchange moved through sea routes that connected multiple societies within a shared oceanic system.

Historian K. A. Nilakanta Sastri captured this vision with the observation that "the sea was the Cholas' highway to influence," highlighting the central role of maritime networks in imperial expansion.

The return of the Anaimangalam plates enters present global discourse on cultural heritage restitution, museum ethics, and post-colonial history.

These copper sheets speak through time, linking eleventh-century administration, seventeenth-century colonial extraction, and twenty-first-century diplomatic restoration.

Their journey reopens a debate on how ancient inscriptions continue to inform modern understandings of history, identity, and international cultural responsibility.

— The author holds a Master's degree in History from Aligarh Muslim University. She can be reached at muskanshafimalik@gmail.com.

Obesity Rising Faster In Low And Middle Income Countries: Study

Press Trust Of India

Obesity trends are rising faster in low and middle-income countries, even as they may have plateaued in high-income ones, a study has shown.

The analysis, published in the journal Nature, looked at data from 232 million individuals across 200 countries and territories over the last 45 years. More than 4,000 population-based studies that carried height and weight data of the participants were analysed to assess global dynamics of obesity during 1980-2024.

Researchers forming the Non-Communicable Diseases Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC) said that for almost all countries, obesity rates have increased over the study period, but trends varied across populations.

"The rise in obesity decelerated in school-aged children and adolescents throughout the 1990s in many high-income countries, and subsequently plateaued in



most at age-standardised prevalences spanning 20 percentage points, from 3-4 per cent for girls in Japan, Denmark and France to 23 per cent for boys in the USA," the authors wrote.

"In most low-income and middle-income countries, the annual absolute change in prevalence has remained stable or increased over time, even though prevalence has surpassed that of high-income countries," they said.

The highly varied dynamics suggested that the social, economic and technological trends

influencing the availability and affordability of foods may have helped control the rise in obesity in high-income countries, but require policy interventions in low-income and middle-income countries, the team said.

They added that understanding trajectories in a detailed manner may help identify interventions and policy changes to address obesity in varied countries.

Obesity is more prevalent now than it was at the end of the twentieth century, with the term 'epidemic' often used to describe its rise.

In Western Europe, prevalence of obesity was found to have stabilised at 11-23 per cent for adults and 4-15 per cent for children and adolescents -- the earliest slowdown was seen around 1990 in Denmark, followed by countries including Iceland, Switzerland, Belgium, and Germany through the 1990s.

However, obesity has increased sharply in low and middle-income countries, reaching a prevalence of 30-40 per cent among adults in countries in Central Europe -- for example, Romania and Czechia -- and Latin America, such as Brazil.

The analysis also revealed that rising obesity trends slowed down among adults in high-income western countries about a decade after they did in children.

However, differences between men and women, such as whether or when obesity plateaued, were found to be country dependent.

Identifying trends in obesity may help explain underlying factors, which could inform policies address and curb its rise, the authors said.

IIT Kanpur Study Links 'Relaxed' Brain To Cognitive Impact

Press Trust Of India

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur are studying alpha waves in the brain -- typically active when a person is awake and relaxed -- to understand how stress affects cognitive functions like attention, working memory, and risk-reward analysis.

"The essence of the study is to understand how different people react to stress differently and how stress can have a modulating effect on human cognition," Tushar Sandhan, associate professor of electrical engineering, told PTI.

The team aims to use non-invasive measures such as 'electroencephalogram' or EEG to build automated models of varied stress dimensions by correlating with factors, including feeling a loss of control or agency, helplessness and anxiety outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5).

Alpha waves in the brain, discovered about a hundred years ago, are said to be at play when one is in a relaxed wakeful state. They represent a calm, relaxed or meditating mind, typically

with eyes closed.

Studies, such as one published in 'Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Xplore' in October 2025, have explored mitigating stress by exposing a stressed individual to binaural beats in the alpha frequency range of 8-12 Hertz.

A binaural beat is an auditory illusion that the brain creates upon listening to slightly differing frequencies delivered to each ear separately.

The result showed a significant rise in alpha wave activity, which was corresponded with participants reporting lower perceived stress levels. IIT-K researchers, led by Sandhan, are investigating the activity of alpha waves in the frontal lobe region, which is crucial for judgement, self-perception and decision-making, using an EEG.

The team is also studying 'frontal alpha symmetry' -- a biomarker referring to an asymmetry, where one hemisphere of the brain records more alpha waves compared to the other. Such asymmetry can exist in a strongly biased manner in specific psychiatric and neurological conditions, including depression.

"Frontal Alpha Asymmetry as a biomarker

has been widely studied, especially in affective neuroscience and depression research," Sandhan explained. "In many previous studies, depression has been linked to (a) greater left frontal alpha power, which could be interpreted as (a) reduced left frontal activity, which is associated with reduced approach motivation," he said.

Approach and withdrawal motivation are behaviours through which one either moves towards or 'approaches' a reward, or away from a threat (withdrawal).

The researchers are using a bioamplifier that is custom assembled with soft, flexible silicon electrodes of the EEG and a customised 3D printed ergonomic headband. Cardiac activity is also being collected via a smartwatch.

Sandhan and colleagues had previously proposed 'DAAFNet', an algorithm that analyses EEG data to identify and classify emotions. 'Affective computing' is an interdisciplinary research field spanning artificial intelligence (AI), psychology and cognitive science, and is focussed on developing systems that can recognise and interpret human emotions.

Government Of Jammu and Kashmir
Industries and Commerce
Department Civil Secretariat, Jammu

Subject: Tentative Seniority List of Assistant Directors of Handicrafts Department as it stood on 20.04.2026.

Government Order No: 59 JK(IND) of 2026
Dated: 08-05-2026

WHEREAS, vide Government Order No. 127-IND of 2020 dated 29.07.2020, final seniority list of Assistant Directors of Handicrafts, as it stood on 01.12.2019, was notified;

AND WHEREAS, officers in the said seniority list have either retired on superannuation or have been inducted into JKAS;

AND WHEREAS, after issuance of the said seniority list, a number of Assistant Directors placed in incharge capacity since 2018 in the Handicrafts Department, have been promoted on substantive basis through DPC/JKPSCT vide Government Order No. 48-JK(IND) of 2026 dated 16.04.2026. The seniority of such incumbents is required to be fixed/framed and notified in the seniority list of the Assistant Directors Handicrafts;

Now, therefore, it is hereby ordered that a tentative seniority list of Assistant Directors of Handicrafts Department, as it stood on 20.04.2026, forming Annexure-A to this order, is hereby issued.

It is further ordered that the concerned officers may submit objections, if any, with regard to their assigned inter-se position in the said tentative seniority list within a period of **15 days** from the date of issuance of this order, failing which it shall be presumed that they have no objections to the same.

By order of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sd/-
(Vikramjit Singh), IPS
Commissioner/ Secretary to the Government

No.:IC- HRM/20/2026-02 **Dated: 08.05.2026**
DIPK-1552/26 **dated: 22-05-2026**

No. Q-15014/01/2023-CPA
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
2nd floor, Prithvi Wing, Indra Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh Road, New Delhi

Subject: Appointment of two (2) Full-time (Technical) Member in the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas -reg.

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for selection and appointment of two (2) Full-time Member (Technical) to the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas, Delhi.

2. The Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) is a Statutory Body established under the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021 (29 of 2021). The Member shall be a full-time incumbent.

The detailed advertisement is available on the website of the Ministry at <https://moef.gov.in> and website of the CAQM at <https://caqm.nic.in>

(P.V Pillai)
Director (CP)
Tel: ph. 011-20819195
Email: v.pazhaniyandi@gov.in

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29th year OF PUBLICATION




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RBI Bulletin Flags Supply-Side Risks to India's Near-Term Outlook



Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI- India's near-term outlook is somewhat clouded by supply-side pressures, and the spillover impact of the West Asia conflict on domestic inflation needs to be monitored, according to the RBI Bulletin.

While the global economy remained shadowed by uncertainties in West Asia, an article in the Bulletin said domestic economic activity exhibited resilience in April.

"The conflict in West Asia continued to exert pressure on commodity markets, global trade flows and supply chains, contributing to the volatility in financial markets. India has entered this phase from a position of macro-economic strength," the article on the state of the economy said.

"Domestic demand continues to be the key driver of growth. However, the near-term outlook is somewhat clouded by supply-side pressures.

"Although headline inflation remains firmly within the tolerance band, the pass-through to domestic prices needs to be monitored," it said.

Retail inflation rose to 3.5 per cent in April, driven mainly by food inflation, while core inflation remained steady.

Against the backdrop of the Iran war, the article said constricted shipping routes and trade flows increased supply chain pressures to their highest levels since 2022.

Prices of commodities for which the Strait of Hormuz is a critical transit route remained elevated in April and early May.

The base metal prices, including aluminium, zinc and nickel, rose due to supply disruptions and higher fuel costs. The financial conditions, crude oil prices and capital flows continue to pose challenges to the external sector outlook," it said.

The merchandise trade deficit widened in April 2026 over March 2026 primarily on account of crude oil and gold imports.

Nevertheless, robust services exports, positive net FDI flows, foreign exchange reserve buffers and a number of proactive policy measures undertaken by the government and the Reserve Bank are likely to cushion the Indian economy against external headwinds, it said.

India is witnessing a trade reconfiguration amidst the emerging geopolitical situation. Its trade through the Strait of Hormuz, which had declined sequentially in March, went up in April 2026.

Govt To Get Record Rs 2.87 Lakh Cr Dividend From RBI

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI- The Reserve Bank on Friday announced a record dividend of Rs 2.87 lakh crore to the government for the year ended March 2026, providing a financial boost for the exchequer amid rising import bills and supply chain disruptions due to the West Asia conflict.

The dividend is 6.7 per cent higher than Rs 2.69 lakh crore for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The surplus transfer by the RBI alone accounts for 91 per cent of the budgeted non-tax revenue under the dividend/surplus of Reserve Bank of India, Nationalised Banks and Financial Institutions' head for FY27.

In a statement, the RBI said its net income, before risk provision and transfer to statutory funds, aggregated Rs 3.96 lakh crore in FY26 as against Rs 3.13 lakh crore in FY25.

"The balance sheet of the Bank expanded by 20.61 per cent to Rs 91,97,121.08 crore as on March 31, 2026," the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said.

The RBI's Central Board of Directors, at its meeting, reviewed the global and domestic economic scenario, including risks to the outlook, and also approved the dividend.

According to the statement, the revised Economic Capital Framework (ECF) provides flexibility to maintain the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB)



between the range of 4.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent of the size of the balance sheet.

"Taking into consideration the current macroeconomic factors, financial performance of the Bank and maintenance of appropriate risk buffers, the Central Board decided to transfer Rs 1,09,379.64 crore towards the CRB for FY 2025-26 as against Rs 44,861.70 crore in the previous year," it said.

The CRB at 6.5 per cent of the size of the RBI balance sheet, compared to 7.5 per cent for 2024-25.

"The Central Board approved the transfer of surplus of Rs 2,86,588.46 crore to the Central Government for the accounting year 2025-26," the RBI said.

Economists said the Rs 2.87 lakh crore dividend is expected to provide a cushion to government finances in the current fiscal, but is unlikely to fully offset the challenges being faced right now amid the geopolitical tensions.

They cautioned that rising

subsidy requirements, elevated crude oil prices and slowing revenue growth could still pose risks to the fiscal deficit target.

While some experts said the dividend payout is marginally lower than expectations, others said the central bank could have transferred an additional Rs 64,518 crore had it maintained the contingent risk buffer (CRB) at last year's level.

So, with the flow of dividends by public sector banks and financial institutions, the estimate of Rs 3.16 lakh crore from dividends and surpluses from the RBI, nationalised banks and financial institutions is likely to exceed by a decent margin, as state-owned lenders have earned handsome profits.

The aggregate net profit of public sector banks increased 11.1 per cent to a historic high of Rs 1.98 lakh crore, marking the fourth consecutive year of aggregate profitability for state-owned lenders.

Financial Conditions, Crude Prices Pose Risk to External Sector: RBI

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI- The financial conditions, crude oil prices, and capital flows continue to pose challenges to the external sector outlook amid the West Asia conflict, Reserve Bank Bulletin said on Friday.

The global economy continued to be shadowed by uncertainties in West Asia, said an article on the state of the economy published in the May Bulletin.

Domestic economic activity exhibited resilience in April, with industrial and services sectors maintaining strength across several segments, it said.

In agriculture, summer sowing progressed well, supported by above normal pre-monsoon rainfall and comfortable reservoir levels, the article said, adding that CPI inflation rose to 3.5 per cent in April, driven mainly by food inflation, while core inflation remained steady.

It noted that the conflict in West Asia continued to exert pressure on commodity markets, global trade flows and sup-



ply chains, contributing to the volatility in financial markets.

"India has entered this phase from a position of macroeconomic strength. Domestic demand continues to be the key driver of growth.

"However, the near-term outlook is somewhat clouded by supply side pressures," the article said. It further said although headline inflation remains firmly within the tolerance band, the pass through to domestic prices needs to be monitored.

"The financial conditions, crude oil prices and capital

flows continue to pose challenges to the external sector outlook," it said.

Nevertheless, robust services exports, positive net FDI flows, foreign exchange reserve buffers and a number of proactive policy measures undertaken by the government and the Reserve Bank are likely to cushion the Indian economy against external headwinds, the article said.

The RBI, however, said views expressed in the Bulletin are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the central bank.



Gold Drops To Rs 1.64 Lakh/10g As Iran Talks Temper Market Anxiety

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Gold prices retreated by Rs 600 to Rs 1.64 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday as tentative progress in US-Iran negotiations reduced precious metals buying, though unresolved tensions around the Strait of Hormuz kept traders cautious.

Snapping a three-day winning streak, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity depreciated by Rs 600 to Rs 1,64,900 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes), according to local marketmen.

Gold prices witnessed a slight decline on Friday. The recent fluctuations in the bullion market are largely influenced by ongoing geopolitical tensions, particularly concerning US-Iran relations, alongside the volatility of the Indian rupee and movements in crude oil prices, Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

However, silver prices re-

mained flat at Rs 2,71,000 per kilogram in the bullion market.

In the international markets, spot gold fell marginally lower to USD 4,522.32 per ounce, while silver slipped 1 per cent to USD 75.87 per ounce.

"Spot gold trading lower to USD 4522 per ounce on Friday as despite narrowing differences between Iran and the US, nuclear and Hormuz control remain contentious issues," Praveen Singh, Head of Commodities at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said.

Meanwhile, Washington has warned that shipping through the Strait of Hormuz should remain toll-free, keeping investors cautious despite signs of diplomatic progress between the US and Iran.

Bullion prices pared some losses after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio described the negotiations as showing tentative progress, though he flagged Hormuz control as a major sticking point.

Stock Markets Rebound, Led By Banks, Positive Global Trends

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI- Stock markets recovered on Friday with the benchmark Sensex closing higher by nearly 232 points following buying in blue-chip bank shares amid positive global trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 231.99 points, or 0.31 per cent, to settle at 75,415.35. During the day, it surged 627.61 points, or 0.83 per cent, to 75,810.97.

The 50-share NSE Nifty edged higher by 64.60 points or 0.27 per cent to end at 23,719.30. Hopes of progress in the US-Iran peace negotiations added to markets' optimism, analysts said.

Among 30 Sensex firms, Trent, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Asian Paints, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Bajaj Finance were the major winners.

Sun Pharma, ITC, Power Grid and Bharat Electronics were among the laggards.

"Domestic markets traded with a mild positive bias, supported by buying at lower levels and moderately constructive global cues, expecting easing tensions in the Middle East. Globally, the AI investment theme remained the primary driver, while domestically, financial stocks led the gains," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments.

The BSE MidCap Select index



went up by 0.30 per cent, while SmallCap Select index declined 0.60 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, Private Banks Index rallied 1.35 per cent, Top 10 Banks jumped 1.23 per cent, Bankex by 1.18 per cent, Telecommunication by 0.93 per cent and Financial Services by 0.90 per cent.

Hospitals dropped the most by 1.39 per cent, followed by Healthcare (1.23 per cent), IT (0.32 per cent), Focused IT (0.29 per cent), Power (0.18 per cent) and Energy (0.09 per cent).

A total of 2,213 stocks advanced, while 1,971 declined and 179 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Nair said that markets remain range-bound, with strong DII inflows cushioning the downside and persistent FII selling limiting the upside. The market is in a buy-on-dips and sell-on-rallies pattern, he added.

On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark climbed 177.36 points, or 0.23 per cent. The Nifty went up by 75.8 points, or 0.32 per cent.

NHAI Calls 2025 Shimla Landslide 'Act of God', Rejects Claim



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has told the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that it is not liable to pay compensation to owners of agricultural land as the May 2025 landslide that occurred in Shimla was an 'Act of God.'

The NHAI submitted its reply against the plea filed in January, claiming that the heavy construction work being undertaken by the authority and its concessionaire, without properly strengthening a slope, had damaged agricultural land in Shimla rural tehsil, causing landslides.

The plea was filed by some land owners against the NHAI and its agencies involved in widening a road for a four-lane project in Shakral village to Dhalli (Kaitthighat-Dhalli Sec-

tion of NH-5).

In response to the plea, the NGT had sought replies from the authorities.

In its reply or counter-affidavit dated May 18, the NHAI said that the applicants highlighted an incident that occurred on May 25 when a retaining wall constructed by its agency was damaged.

"The incident was caused solely due to natural calamity (Act of God/Vis Major). Heavy rainfall occurred in Himachal Pradesh from late May 2025 onwards, triggering widespread and large-scale landslides, including in areas where no construction or project of any nature was being undertaken," the reply said.

It said that the incident, being an Act of God, was supported by the IMD report and the state government's disaster declaration dated September 1, 2025.

Pilot Project For Weather-Based Crop Insurance Scheme Launched In Shopian

Observer News Service

SHOPIAN- In a significant step towards safeguarding the farming community against unpredictable climate risks and crop losses, a comprehensive farmer awareness programme on Weather-Based Crop Insurance Scheme was held Friday at Mini Secretariat Shopian. The programme was organized in connection with the pilot project on Weather-Based Crop Insurance Scheme for apple growers in District Shopian, launched jointly by SKUAST-Kashmir, SMARTX and ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company.

Additional District Development Commissioner Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone, chaired the programme and was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the ADDC said that crop insurance is vital for protecting farmers against losses caused by adverse weather conditions, natural calamities and other unforeseen risks. He said that the programme aimed to bridge the information gap regarding crop insurance schemes and ensure that farmers are properly informed about their benefits, registration process and claim settlement mechanism. The ADDC stressed the need for creating greater awareness among farmers, particularly apple growers, so that they are able to secure their livelihoods through timely enrollment under the scheme.

He also highlighted the importance of timely registration, proper guidance and coordinated efforts by concerned departments and field functionaries to ensure maximum participation of farmers under the scheme.

Prof. Sameera, Head Agrometeorology, SKUAST-Kashmir, while addressing the gathering, emphasized the importance of weather-based crop insurance in view of increasing climate-related challenges.

Rupee Rises 76 Paise To Close At 95.60 Against US Dollar

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI- The rupee rose for the second consecutive session on Friday to close sharply higher at 95.60 against the US dollar on softening of crude oil prices and supposed intervention by the Reserve Bank.

Forex traders said markets found some comfort after comments from US Secretary of State Marco Rubio hinted that diplomatic talks linked to the Iran situation were moving in a constructive direction.

Moreover, positive domestic equities and a decline in US treasury yields also supported the rupee.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 96.30 against the US dollar and stayed firm during the intraday. At the end of the trading session, the rupee was quoted at 95.60, higher by 76 paise from its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee rebounded 50 paise from its all-time closing low to settle at 96.36 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on uncertainty between the US and Iran, which may pressurise the rupee. However, optimism over the peace deal and softening of crude oil prices may support the rupee at lower levels.

"US Treasury yields are also easing, which may also support the domestic currency. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 95.50 to 96.30," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

Sahil Kapoor, Head of Products and Market Strategist, SVP, DSP Mutual Fund, in a research note, said it is time to buy rupee assets and not bet against them.

"Currencies, interest rates, and flows are inherently cyclical. Betting against the rupee at these depressed REER levels and tight inflation differentials is a low-probability trade. Conversely, the data suggests it is time to allocate towards rupee-denominated assets across both equities and bonds," he said.

Forex Kitty Drops USD 8 Bn To USD 688.894 Bn

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI- India's forex reserves dropped USD 8.094 billion to USD 688.894 billion during the week ended May 15, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Friday.

The overall reserves had jumped by USD 6.295 billion to USD 696.988 billion during the week ended May 8.

The kitty had expanded to an all-time high of USD 728.494 billion during the week ended February 27 this year before the onset of the Middle East conflict which led to several weeks of a drop as the rupee came under pressure and the RBI had to intervene in the forex market through dollar sales.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also made multiple public appeals starting May 11 to countrymen to conserve forex by cutting down on foreign travel, limiting fuel use and refraining from gold buys for a year.

For the week ended May 15, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 6.483 billion to USD 545.904 billion, the central bank's data showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include effects of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units, such as the euro, pound, and yen, held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Value of gold reserves also declined USD 1.536 billion to USD 119.317 billion during the week, the RBI said. The special drawing rights (SDRs) were down by USD 49 million to USD 18.824 billion, the apex bank said.

India's reserve position with the IMF was also down by USD 25 million to USD 4.85 billion at the end of the reporting week, according to the apex bank's data.

Europe Likely To Face High Oil, Gas Prices Until End Of 2027

Associated Press

NICOSIA (CYPRUS)- European Union officials said Friday that Europeans can expect oil and gas prices to remain above what they were before the Iran war for at least until the end of 2027, with prices of other goods also following an upward trajectory.

EU Economy Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis said that higher energy prices are primarily responsible for driving inflation to a forecast of 3.1 per cent for this year and 2.4 per cent for 2027. That's significantly higher than the earlier forecast for this year of 1.9 per cent.

"We expect that this energy inflation will gradually also trickle down to different sectors of the economy," Dombrovskis said after a meeting of the 21-member eurozone's finance ministers, who make up the Eurogroup.

European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde said that even if the conflict in the Middle East ended now, "lagging effects" would keep the prices of goods elevated.

"And it's probably a fact that price levels will be higher at the end of this crisis, when we see the end of the crisis," Lagarde said.

She said that the ECB would take "all the necessary measures" to keep price stability at 2 per cent by paying close attention to the aftereffects of the initial economic shock brought on by the energy price hike. She also pointed to how much oil the EU holds in reserve to meet possible demand.

Eurogroup President Kyriakos Pierrakakis said that for the EU, an end to the crisis would mean a return to free navigation without the imposition of any tolls through the Strait of Hormuz, from which roughly a fifth of the world's oil and gas passes.

Ladakh Inches Closer to Article 371-Like Protection After Delhi Talks

Agencies

Srinagar: The prolonged stand-off between Ladakh and the Union Government over safeguards and the form of elected governance has almost come to an end, with both sides reaching an understanding on key issues on Friday.

Two groups spearheading the agitation in the Union Territory claimed that they have reached an in-principle agreement with the Government of India on providing constitutional safeguards to Ladakh on the lines of Article 371, along with a powerful elected government headed by a Chief Minister, with the entire bureaucracy under his control.

In a joint handout, the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) said they have reached an in-principle understanding with the Government of India on restoring democracy in Ladakh and providing constitutional safeguards similar to those under Articles 371A, 371F, and 371G, which apply to Nagaland, Sikkim, and Mizoram respectively.

Articles 371A, 371F, and 371G of the Indian Constitution provide special protections to these states: Article 371A safeguards Nagaland's customs and land rights, Article 371F secures Sikkim's laws and representation, and Article 371G protects Mizoram's traditions and land

ownership.

According to the handout, legislative, executive, and financial powers will rest with elected representatives through a Union Territory-level legislative body. "All bureaucrats of the UT, including the Chief Secretary, will come under the executive head of the UT-level elected body proposed to be the Chief Minister," the handout stated.

The KDA and LAB stated that they look forward to closely working out the finer operational details with the MHA in consultation with legal and constitutional experts.

Both LAB and KDA said MHA authorities explained that the only reason Ladakh cannot be

granted statehood at present is its lack of adequate revenue generation to meet revenue expenditures such as employee salaries. "However, this setup will lead Ladakh towards full statehood once it meets the revenue criteria," the handout further stated.

The handout was issued after a meeting of sub-committee comprising representatives of MHA, LAB and KDA.

During the meeting, both LAB and KDA, as per statement, reiterated the long-standing aspirations of the people of Ladakh regarding the restoration of democracy, constitutional safeguards, and the demand for Statehood and Sixth Schedule protections. (KNO)

Lt General Ghai Calls On LG



Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Deputy Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai on Friday called upon Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha here, an official

spokesman said.

Lt Gen Ghai, who is the Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy), called on the J-K LG at the Raj Bhavan here, the spokesman said.

Lt Gen Ghai was accompanied by the General Office

Doctor Assaulted in Pulwama Hospital

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: A doctor at a government hospital in Pulwama was injured on Friday after a patient's attendant allegedly assaulted him, officials said.

The incident took place inside the District Hospital, Pulwama, in South Kashmir.

An attendant attacked the doctor, Omar Khan, with a bench, striking his forehead and causing injuries that required eight stitches, officials said.

A security guard was also injured during the altercation, they said. The attendant allegedly tried to force Dr Khan, who was performing his duties at the Outpatient Department (OPD), to examine his patient. Khan had already worked an additional hour beyond his duty time and advised the attendant to have the patient examined by another doctor on duty, officials said.

Register FIR in Missing Cases Immediately, Make Anti-human Trafficking Units Functional: SC

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Noting that 47,000 children remain untraced in India as on date, the Supreme Court on Friday directed police authorities across the country to immediately register FIRs in cases of missing persons and said the anti-human trafficking units should be made fully functional within four weeks.

Issuing a slew of directions, a bench of Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and R Mahadevan



expressed displeasure over the rise in the number of cases of

missing children and said they are often victims of organised interstate trafficking syndicates.

"The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, is directed to put in place an all-India grid connecting each and every police station in the country on one platform, which will have a special portal dedicated to human trafficking, including missing children and women.

"The concerned police stations are directed to immediately institute FIR the moment any

information reaches them with regard to any person missing, without waiting for a preliminary inquiry or leaving it to the guardians of the missing persons... The said FIR shall mandatorily incorporate the relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, relating to kidnapping/trafficking," the bench said.

The court said whenever a child goes missing, authorities should proceed on the presumption of kidnapping or abduction

from the outset.

It said registering such cases under the penal provisions for kidnapping would ensure seriousness in investigation and avoid delays.

The apex court also directed that the children who are traced should ordinarily be handed over to their families within 24 hours, unless there are indications that the family itself was involved in trafficking or exploitation.

"The moment any person is

recovered or rescued, he/she should be taken for Aadhaar verification or for the making of an Aadhaar card. This direction is issued in view of the fact that, for the purpose of procuring an Aadhaar card, fingerprints and other biometrics are taken," the bench said.

The directions were passed on a petition filed by one G Ganesh before the Madras High Court after his daughter went missing from Chennai on September 19, 2011.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Hail, Snow Spell

The wee hours of Friday. Growers said the hailstorm lasted for nearly 10 to 15 minutes, damaging orchards spread across large areas of the district.

Farmers said pea-sized hailstones struck orchards at a sensitive stage when fruit formation had just begun, causing visible injury to apple fruitlets, leaves and branches.

"We have suffered major losses once again. The hailstorm came suddenly and within minutes damaged orchards spread over several kanals," said Fayaz Ahmad, an orchardist from Largam village. "The fruit and leaves have been badly hit. This season has become extremely difficult for growers."

Preliminary estimates suggest around 15 to 20 per cent damage to fruit in affected areas, though growers claimed losses in some villages could range between 25 and 30 per cent.

"This is the fourth hailstorm in Shopian this season. Repeated weather shocks are breaking the backbone of orchardists," said Mohammad Yousuf Bhat, another fruit grower. "Growers are already under financial stress, and such calamities are pushing them towards collapse."

A severe hailstorm also struck Nagbal, Zaradihar, Machama, Mandoora, Panner Jageer and adjoining areas of Tral in Pulwama district, where apple blossoms and vegetable crops suffered extensive damage.

"We have never witnessed this kind of hailstorm. It continued for nearly half an hour and destroyed everything," said a grower from Tral. "Our entire livelihood depends on horticulture. If crops keep getting damaged like this, how will growers survive?"

In north Kashmir, the Lasar area of Rafiabud and villages in the Zaingeer belt of Baramulla district also witnessed intense hailstorm and heavy rainfall during the afternoon and evening hours, damaging orchards and agricultural land.

"The weather changed suddenly as dark clouds gathered over the area, followed by intense rainfall and hailstones. Apple orchards and crops have suffered damage," a resident from Rafiabud said.

The weather activity disrupted normal life in several areas, with waterlogging reported from low-lying localities and traffic movement slowing on many roads during heavy showers.

Growers across Kashmir expressed anger over what they termed the government's failure to introduce long-pending crop protection measures despite recurring natural calamities.

They reiterated demands for implementation of a comprehensive crop insurance scheme, Market Intervention Scheme (MIS), and waiver of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans up to Rs 3 lakh.

"We have repeatedly demanded crop insurance and loan waivers, but nobody is listening to us," said an orchardist from Shopian. "Every year, hailstorms, untimely rains and market distress destroy our crops, yet growers are left to suffer alone."

Farmers said horticulture remains the backbone of Kashmir's economy and repeated weather-related losses are threatening the livelihoods of thousands of families dependent on orchards and agriculture.

Affected orchardists also alleged that despite repeated disasters since 2014, growers have received neither adequate compensation nor any meaningful relief package.

"Survey teams visit affected areas every time, estimates are prepared, but nothing concrete happens on the ground," several growers said. "The government must immediately announce compensation and waive loans to help orchardists recover."

Experts warned that repeated hailstorms during flowering and early fruit formation stages can severely impact fruit quality,

recovery and overall yield.

Mukhtar Ahmad, an expert from the Horticulture Department, advised growers to immediately spray recommended fungicides in hail-affected orchards to prevent fungal infections and secondary diseases.

"After three days, a 0.2 per cent urea spray can help partially damaged crops recover," he said, adding that growers should maintain proper drainage, avoid immediate pruning and ensure balanced nutrition and adequate air circulation in orchards.

The Meteorological Department said weather conditions are likely to remain unstable over the next few days.

According to the forecast, generally dry weather is expected during the forenoon between May 23 and 25, with brief showers likely at scattered places during late afternoon hours.

From May 26 to 28, the weather is expected to remain mainly hot and dry across Jammu and Kashmir, while brief spells of rain are likely at isolated places between May 29 and 31.

Weather officials advised people, especially those living in vulnerable and mountainous areas, to remain cautious during thunderstorms, gusty winds and hailstorm activity. (inputs from KNO)

Tech-Driven 'Smart

but we will find each and every infiltrator and send them out of the country," Shah said.

He also asserted that the government would not allow any "artificial change" in the country's demography through infiltration from across the borders.

The proposed "smart border" system will use advanced technology including drones, radars and smart surveillance cameras to strengthen security along the nearly 6,000-km borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Calling both frontiers "vulnerable" from a national security perspective, Shah said traditional methods alone were insufficient to guard the borders effectively. He stressed the need for coordinated efforts involving security agencies and state governments.

The home minister said the borders currently face threats such as illegal infiltration, narcotics smuggling, drone-based arms trafficking, fake currency circulation and organised crime.

"It is most important to identify future dangers, and it is our responsibility to stop the artificial demographic change being attempted from the other side through infiltration," he said.

Referring to India's security policy under the Narendra Modi government, Shah said the country had adopted a more assertive defence doctrine since 2014.

"We have defeated all three attacks carried out by Pakistan whether it was in Uri, Pulwama or Pahalgam. We have given them a befitting response by striking deep inside Pakistan," he said.

Shah also said the government had achieved its target of making India free from Naxalism and emphasised that security forces should focus on uprooting threats rather than merely containing them.

He urged BSF personnel to work closely with local administrations in border areas to identify infiltrators and plug gaps facilitating smuggling and illegal movement.

The minister further announced that the Centre would soon convene a meeting with the chief ministers of Tripura, West Bengal and Assam to discuss border security measures.

During the event, Shah honoured BSF personnel with gallantry medals, including officers and jawans involved in Operation Sindoor.

HC Flags Irreversible

Milk Producers' Union Ltd, Gujarat,

challenging a complaint pending before the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Shopian, and the cognizance order dated October 7, 2021.

"Contaminated milk product has the potential to seriously affect human health and may cause long-term and irreversible consequences, particularly upon children whose physical growth and immunity depend upon safe and nutritious food. Therefore, issues concerning food safety cannot be treated lightly or decided merely on technical considerations."

The bench observed that the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 was enacted to ensure safe and wholesome food for human consumption and to protect the public from unsafe food articles. Referring to observations made by the Supreme Court, the bench said maintenance and improvement of public health is not merely an administrative concern but a constitutional obligation of the highest importance.

"While exercising jurisdiction under Section 482 CrPC, this Court cannot adopt an approach which may dilute the statutory safeguards enacted under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 for protection of consumers," the court observed.

The petitioners had contended that a sample of "Homogenized Toned Milk" initially tested by the Food Analyst, Kashmir Division, had been declared of standard quality and that authorities had illegally referred the sample to a Referral Laboratory without recording reasons or granting them an opportunity of hearing.

However, the court held that the Designated Officer had acted strictly in accordance with Rule 2.4.3 of the Food Safety and Standards Rules, 2011 by recording reasons in writing before forwarding the second part of the sample to the Referral Laboratory at National Dairy Development Board, Anand, Gujarat.

The court noted that the Designated Officer had found that several crucial parameters, including antibiotic residues, pesticide residues and heavy metals, had not been examined in the initial analysis and, therefore, referred the sample for comprehensive scientific testing.

Observing that the statutory framework empowers authorities to ensure complete scientific scrutiny of food products in the larger public interest, the court rejected the argument that a prior hearing was mandatory before referring the sample, saying neither the Act nor the Rules contemplate such a requirement.

The court further held that once the Referral Laboratory declared the sample unsafe under Sections 26(1) and 26(2)(i) read with Section 3(1)(zz)(xii) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, the earlier report lost significance, as the Referral Laboratory is the final scientific authority under the statutory framework.

The petitioners had also argued that the Managing Director could not be prosecuted in view of Section 66 of the Act because another officer had been nominated for food safety. Rejecting the contention, the court observed that the Managing Director, being overall in charge of the affairs of the company, could not claim blanket immunity at the threshold stage.

The High Court also vacated the interim stay that had remained in operation since April 21, 2022, observing that continuation of such protection in a matter concerning unsafe food products would seriously jeopardise public health. Holding that the material on record prima facie disclosed commission of offences punishable under Section 59 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, the court dismissed the petition and directed the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Shopian, to proceed with the trial expeditiously, preferably within six months.

SC Grants Bail

undergone in custody and the fact that conclusion of trial may take some time, the petitioner is directed to be enlarged on bail," the

bench observed.

The court directed that Thokar be released on furnishing a bail bond to the satisfaction of the special NIA court in Delhi.

Thokar was arrested on October 20, 2021, in connection with a case registered under various provisions of the erstwhile Indian Penal Code and the UAPA.

According to the prosecution, the case arose from intelligence inputs regarding an alleged larger conspiracy in Kashmir Valley orchestrated by banned outfits including Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen.

The NIA alleged that these groups, along with facilitators and handlers based in Pakistan, were involved in radicalising vulnerable local youth and recruiting "hybrid" militants after the Centre revoked Article 370 on August 5, 2019, ending the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Investigators further alleged that Thokar played an active role in arranging shelter and logistical support for militants and their associates in the Valley.

During proceedings before the Delhi High Court, Thokar's counsel had argued that there was no substantive evidence linking him to any criminal conspiracy with militant organisations and that nothing incriminating had been recovered from his possession.

Oposing the plea, the NIA had contended that evidence collected during the investigation clearly showed Thokar's involvement in facilitating terrorist activities in Kashmir.

The Delhi High Court had earlier refused him bail in September 2023, upholding the trial court's January 2023 order rejecting his application.

'Pick-&-Choose' Hiring

the petitioners approached the CAT seeking quashment of the advertisement notification and directions for regularisation of their services. After the Tribunal declined interim relief, the matter reached the High Court.

The Division Bench observed that the petitioners were engaged without any advertisement or competitive selection process and their appointments could not be regularised in violation of the constitutional mandate of equality in public employment under Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution.

The criticised the long-standing practice adopted by governments and instrumentalities of making backdoor appointments on temporary, contractual or daily-wage basis and later seeking to regularise such appointees.

"Permitting the State to make ad hoc and temporary appointments by adopting a 'pick-and-choose' method, without issuing advertisement notifications or conducting competitive examinations, and then introducing a policy of regularisation, is nothing short of a fraud on the Constitution," the court said.

The successive Governments in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, now the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, and their functionaries and instrumentalities, the court said, have consistently adopted a unique modus operandi to deny citizens their right to equality and equal opportunity in matters of employment.

"The modus operandi adopted by the successive Governments for achieving cheap political motives is to first recruit handpicked candidates on account of their political affiliations and proximities and then engage them on ad hoc, contractual, temporary and daily wage basis on the pretext that such arrangements are required to be made to meet the exigencies and the emergent situations," the court said, adding, "These persons are continued from time to time till the Government comes up with a policy of regularization of the services of such persons. These persons are regularized in Government service either by issuing

executive orders, statutory rules, or even by legislative enactments."

Whatever be the mode adopted by the Government to regularize these temporary, ad hoc, contractual and daily wage employees, picked up arbitrarily other than by holding a fair process of selection and providing fair opportunity to the eligible candidates to compete, is nothing short of fraud on the Constitution, the court said.

"By such acts and omissions, the State has virtually rendered the provisions of Articles 14 and 16 of our solemn document known as the Constitution of India, redundant and a dead letter."

The Court extensively relied upon the Constitution Bench judgment of the Supreme Court in Secretary, State of Karnataka v. Uma Devi and subsequent rulings, reiterating that public employment must strictly conform to constitutional requirements of fairness, transparency and equal opportunity.

Rejecting the petitioners' plea based on "legitimate expectation," the Court held that temporary or contractual employees engaged without a proper selection process cannot seek permanent absorption through judicial intervention.

The Court also rejected reliance placed by the petitioners on a 2013 University Council decision concerning regularisation of certain casual and contractual employees, holding that the policy was not applicable to engagements made in 2017 and had "outlived its life and utility."

Referring to the Supreme Court judgment in State of Karnataka v. M.L. Kesari, the High Court clarified that the one-time exception carved out in Uma Devi for regularisation applied only to "irregular" appointees who had completed ten years of service as on April 10, 2006, without protection of court orders.

The Court further observed that constitutional courts should refrain from issuing directions that obstruct regular recruitment processes initiated in accordance with law.

While dismissing all petitions, the Bench granted relief to the petitioners by permitting them to participate in the ongoing recruitment process, subject to eligibility. The Court also directed that they be granted age relaxation if they were within the prescribed age limit at the time of their initial engagement in 2017.

To enable them to apply, the Court granted an additional 15 days from the date of judgment for submission of application forms.

Enhance Random

congregation points across the Valley. Birdi emphasised the need for adequate security measures to regulate entry and exit points, ensure public safety, and deploy security personnel at sensitive locations to avoid overcrowding, the spokesperson said.

He said the IGP also instructed field officers to intensify surveillance, conduct random checks at vulnerable spots, and enhance patrolling to counter any potential security threats during the festive period.

Reviewing arrangements for the yatra, the IGP emphasised coordinated planning and preparedness, particularly regarding the safety and security of the yatis, the spokesperson said.

He said Birdi instructed officers to deploy anti-sabotage teams, and enhance surveillance and threat detection capabilities by utilising advanced technologies and real-time monitoring on both pilgrimage routes.

Birdi underscored the significance of stakeholder collaboration and implementing robust contingency plans to effectively address any unforeseen challenges, providing insights into the necessary Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that must be followed throughout the pilgrimage.

Everest Record Holder Warns Of Nepal Danger As Two Indian Mountaineers Die

AFP

Two Indian climbers have died on Mount Everest during a record-breaking period of ascents via Nepal's southern route, as experts warn of overcrowding on the world's highest peak.

Nepal is home to eight of the world's 10 highest peaks and welcomes hundreds of adventurers each spring.

At least five climbers have died during this Everest season, including the two Indians and three Nepalis. A United States and a Czech climber died on Mount Makalu earlier this month.

Nivesh Karki, director at Pioneer Adventures, named the latest victims as Sandeep Are, who he said summited on May 20, and Arun Kumar Tiwari, who reached the peak on May 21.

"They fell ill while descending at high altitude. We are working out how to retrieve the bodies," Karki told the AFP news agency.

Nepali climber Kami Rita Sherpa, who scaled Everest for a record 32nd time earlier this month, returned to the capital, Kathmandu, on Friday, where he expressed concern about the experience of some climbers.

Pictures posted by climbers show a long line of people climbing up fixed ropes, queueing in the icy, low-oxygen high-altitude zones.

"The expedition this time felt a bit crowded," said Kami Rita Sherpa, dubbed the "Everest Man".

"The government should regu-



late this a bit ... They should let in only climbers of quality - there should be a limit," he told AFP.

On Thursday, a record number of climbers reached the 8,849-metre (29,032-foot) Himalayan peak from the Nepali side, according to tourism officials, who gave a preliminary total of 275 pending final confirmation.

The peak can be tackled from both Nepal and the northern face in Tibet, but Chinese authorities have closed the latter route this year.

The Guinness Book of World

Records lists the highest number to climb Everest in a single day as 354, in May 2019.

Nepali tourism officials said the final number will be tallied after the climbs are verified, which require photographs and statements from the climber's expedition company and guides.

Among the successful climbers on Friday was British guide Kenton Cool, who reached the top for the 20th time - extending his own record for the most ascents of the world's highest peak by a non-Nepali.

The high number of climbers has rekindled concerns about overcrowding on the mountain - especially if poor weather shortens the climbing window.

The country has issued a record 492 Everest permits for foreigners this season, with a city of tents set up at the foot of the mountain for climbers and support staff.

Approximately 600 people - including guides - have summited Everest since the start of this year's spring climbing season in April.

HC Pulls Up WFI For Declaring Phogat Ineligible

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Friday pulled up the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) for its decision to declare celebrated grappler Vinesh Phogat "ineligible" from participation in domestic events and asked the Centre to constitute an expert panel to evaluate her.

A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia observed that the WFI's departure from the earlier practice of permitting the participation of reputed athletes "speaks volumes" and asked the Centre to ensure that Phogat, who is seeking her return from a maternity break, is allowed to participate in the upcoming Asian Games selection trials.

The bench emphasised that motherhood is celebrated in the country, and the federation should not act with "vengeance".

It asked the Centre to constitute an expert panel to evaluate Phogat after the government counsel submitted that the framework provided by the Sports Authority of India permits relaxation of eligibility criteria in certain cases.

"Ask the experts to evaluate her chances... Ensure that she participates," the court orally said, as it clarified it would take up the matter at 2:30 pm again to enable the government counsel to come back with further details with respect to the constitution of the team of expert.

The court was hearing Phogat's appeal against a single-judge's order of May 18 refusing her immediate relief on the issue of her par-



ticipation in the selection trials on May 30-31 for this year's Asian Games despite being declared "ineligible" by the WFI.

Phogat's senior counsel urged the bench to grant her the opportunity to participate in the trials, contending that the show-cause notice issued to her on May 9, a day before her participation in a domestic event in Gonda, showed that "somebody is clutching at straws" to oust her.

The court expressed its displeasure at the show-cause notice claiming that Phogat's disqualification in the Paris Olympics was a "national shame" and questioned why it should not be presumed that the WFI changed the selection criteria for her.

"She became a mother in July 2025. We are in May. She is a wrestler of international repute. Why can't it be presumed that you changed it (selection criteria) for her. Whatever may be the feud or dispute, why should the cause of

sports suffer? Motherhood is celebrated in the country, should it come to the detriment of a person?" the court orally remarked.

"The change in circular says all. Don't conduct yourself like this. This is not in the best interest of sports. Deviation from the earlier circular speaks volumes," it added.

The WFI had declared Phogat ineligible to participate in domestic events till June 26, 2026, citing the mandatory six-month notice period linked to athletes returning from retirement under anti-doping rules.

A defiant Vinesh, however, showed up at the National Open Ranking Tournament in Gonda.

Phogat had participated in the protest by women wrestlers in 2023 against alleged sexual harassment by WFI's then-president Brijbhushan Sharan Singh.

In August 2024, she was disqualified from the 50kg category Olympic finals for being 100 gm overweight in the morning weigh-in.

Eriksen On Verge Of Relegation With Wolfsburg After 0-0 Playoff Draw

AP

WOLFSBURG: Christian Eriksen is one game away from Bundesliga relegation with Wolfsburg after a scoreless draw with second-division Paderborn in the first leg of their playoff on Thursday.

Eriksen, who signed a two-year deal when he joined Wolfsburg in September, likely didn't imagine he'd find himself on the verge of demotion to Germany's second division at the end of his first season.

But if Paderborn wins the second leg of their promotion/relegation playoff at home on Monday, Wolfsburg - the 2009 Bundesliga champion - would drop a division for the first time since it was promoted to the top tier in 1997.

Paderborn is bidding to return to the Bundesliga af-

ter it was relegated in 2020 after one season in the top flight.

The end-of-season playoff pits the team that finishes third from bottom in



the Bundesliga against the third-place finisher in the second division to determine which will play in the top division the following season.

Wolfsburg clinched its

place in the playoff in the final round of the Bundesliga with a win over St. Pauli, sending the Hamburg-based side down to the second division, while

Nerves played a role as the game progressed, however. Paderborn's Filip Bilbija had an effort cleared off the line late on.

Paderborn defender Jonah Sticker will miss the second leg after being sent off with two bookings in as many minutes in stoppage time.

Paderborn, a city to the east of Dortmund in the west German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, is taking part in the playoff for the first time, while Wolfsburg is navigating the showdown for the third time after wins over Eintracht Braunschweig in 2017 and Holstein Kiel the following year.

born, but otherwise Wolfsburg created more in the first half with Paderborn goalkeeper Dennis Seimen denying Adam Daghim in a one-on-one.

Nerves played a role as the game progressed, however. Paderborn's Filip Bilbija had an effort cleared off the line late on.

Paderborn, a city to the east of Dortmund in the west German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, is taking part in the playoff for the first time, while Wolfsburg is navigating the showdown for the third time after wins over Eintracht Braunschweig in 2017 and Holstein Kiel the following year.

SRH Outclass RCB But Fail To Clinch Top-Two Spot

Press Trust of India

HYDERABAD: Sunrisers Hyderabad maintained their now familiar hell-for-leather template, but even a thumping 55-run victory couldn't prevent Royal Challengers Bengaluru from topping the points table at the end of their IPL league stage engagement here on Friday.

Abhishek Sharma's batting, Ishan Kishan's daredevilry and Heinrich Klaasen's brute muscularity took SRH to a meaty total of 255 for 4.

For RCB, the primary target was to score 166 to finish in top two and ensure two shots at qualifying for the IPL final and they did that with ease despite losing the contest by a big margin. They finished on 200 for 4.

RCB (NRR +0.783), thus, topped the group league phase with Gujarat Titans (NRR +0.695) and SRH (NRR +0.524) finishing second and third respectively despite all three teams getting 18 points apiece.

The chase was always



out of question even as Venkatesh Iyer (44 off 19 balls) provided a solid start. Virat Kohli (15 off 11 balls) and Devdutt Padikkal (21 off 14 balls) didn't get too many.

Once RCB understood that they can't win the match, veterans Rajat Patidar (56 off 39 balls) and Krunal Pandya (41 not out off 31 balls) concentrated on the 'Magic Figure' of 166 with a 84-run stand.

Once Patidar played Pat Cummins over deep point for a six, RCB ensured a top-two finish. He was out at the team score of 178,

which was required to finish on top of the table.

Among SRH bowlers, Eshan Malinga (2/33 in 4 overs) was once again brilliant with his lengths, while Bihar youngster Sakib Husain (1/31) also didn't let the batters get away during middle overs.

Earlier, when SRH batted, Abhishek (56 off 22 balls) scored another 20-ball half-century and nullified Bhuvneshwar Kumar in his first spell.

Vice-captain Kishan found the gaps while displaying both precision and cheekiness to pummel his

way to 79 off just 44 balls.

Klaasen (51 off 24 balls), probably the most consistent batter across teams below No. 3, literally toyed with a world-class operator like Josh Hazlewood, taking as many as 27 runs off his third over and the team's 13th, as the Orange Army ensured that they would cross the 250-run mark on a batting featherbed.

The mayhem was started by Abhishek when he elegantly lofted a Bhuvneshwar delivery over wide of long-off to get his first six. Bhuvneshwar, who found a second wind in this IPL, wasn't allowed to settle down as he flicked him twice -- once over square-leg and then over deep mid-wicket off back-to-back deliveries.

Romario Shepherd's friendly, occasional medium pace wasn't suppose to trouble the world's No. 1 ranked T20 batter, and it didn't. He was lofted for a couple of straight sixes while Suyash Sharma's delivery was also sent soaring into the orbit with minimal footwork.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION GANDERBAL
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

e-NIT No. 10/EE/R&B/Divn/Gbl of 2026-27 under Endorsement No.:2048-53 Dated: 21-05-2026

For and behalf of the Lieutenant Governor, UT of J&K, e-tenders (In Single Cover) are being invited on a Percentage basis (as applicable) from approved and eligible Contractors registered with the J&K Government, CPWD, Railways, and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

| S. No. | Name of the Work | Adv. Cost (In Lacs) | Cost of Tender Document (In Rupees) | Earnest Money (In Rupees) | Time of Completion | Class of Contractor |
|--------|--|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 01. | Upgradation of Inner links of Duderhama and Old Hospital road under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 19.13 | 800 | 38,260 | 30-Days | BEE/CEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 02. | Upgradation of Main road leading upto New District Hospital under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 19.27 | 800 | 38,540 | 30-Days | BEE/CEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 03. | Imp/Upp of Inner links Ward 3 and 4 Dohbipora under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 19.63 | 800 | 39,260 | 30-Days | BEE/CEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 04. | Imp/Upp of Inner Links of Arch under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 19.73 | 800 | 39,460 | 30-Days | BEE/CEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 05. | Imp/Upp of Link road to Ziyarat Mehssa Sahab from Masjid Shareef Kalla Mohalla Repore under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 19.81 | 800 | 39,620 | 30-Days | BEE/CEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 06. | Imp/Upp of Arampora link road to H/o. Mohd Shafi Ganie under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 19.90 | 800 | 39,800 | 30-Days | BEE/CEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 07. | Macadamization of Warboni road from Anglio School to Al-Banat School, Upper Dar Mohalla, Baba Daryadeen Rangli Ganderal under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 29.62 | 1100 | 59,240 | 30-Days | AAV/BEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 08. | Upgradation of Balance portion of road from Khalmulla to Jamia Masjid Khalmulla under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 38.05 | 1100 | 76,100 | 30-Days | AAV/BEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 09. | Imp/Upp of Link road from Girls M/S to H/o. M. Sultan Sofi Wanipora under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 38.67 | 1100 | 77,340 | 30-Days | AAV/BEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 10. | Macadamization of link road New Colony Haran under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 38.81 | 1100 | 77,620 | 30-Days | AAV/BEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 11. | Imp/Upp of Nunner road from Power Canal cement bridge Baba Wayil to Ward No. 7 H/o. Younis Khan under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 39.00 | 1100 | 78,000 | 30-Days | AAV/BEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 12. | Upgradation of Pandach Gulab Bagh road under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 39.37 | 1100 | 78,740 | 30-Days | AAV/BEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 13. | Upgradation of Main chowk Baoora incl. link opposite to JK Bank Baoora under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 39.68 | 1100 | 79,360 | 30-Days | AAV/BEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |
| 14. | Upgradation of Bagoo Rampora Ganderal under C&T (Machine Mix laid with Paver). | 40.00 | 1100 | 80,000 | 30-Days | AAV/BEE Class with HMPO or MoU with Registered HMPO |

1. The bidding documents, which would include qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications/drawings, a bill of quantities (B.O.Q.), a set of contract terms and conditions, and other details, can be viewed/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in on the dates listed below:-

| | |
|--|--|
| 1. Date of Issue of Tender Notice | 21-05-2026 |
| 2. Period of Downloading of Bidding Documents | 21-05-2026 |
| 3. Bid Submission Start Date | 21-05-2026 from 04:00 PM |
| 4. Bid Submission End Date | 29-05-2026 upto 04:00 PM |
| 5. Date & Time of Opening of Technical Bids (Online) | 30-05-2026 at 10:00 AM in the Office of PW(R&B) Division Ganderal. |

2. Bids must be accompanied by a Treasury Challan (dated between the bid submission start date and the Bid Submission End date) deposited in M.H. 0059 in the name of Executive Engineer R&B Division Ganderal (tender inviting authority) as the cost of the tender document. (The name of the Work along with NIT No. and Serial No. must be written on the Treasury Challan).

3. At the time of tendering, all bidders must upload earnest money/bid security equal to 2% of the Advertised Cost in the form of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to the tender receiving authority, i.e. Executive Engineer R&B Division Ganderal (Dated between the bid submission start date and the Bid Submission End date).

4. The 1st lowest bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of Allotted Cost as performance security in shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer R&B Division Ganderal within 03 days before Fixation of contract and shall be released after completion of DLP and the 2% EMD shall be released in favour of successful bidder only after the receipt of 5% Performance Security.

5. Unbalanced Bid-
As per the Circular Instructions of Finance Department Vide No. (Principal Secretary to Government Finance Department's circular issued under endorsement No: FD-Code/441/2021-02-158 Dated:- 08.08.2025), which is reproduced as:
▶ Where the bid price is below 10% but not below 20% of the project cost put to bid, the additional performance guarantee/security percentage shall be incremented by 0.1% for every percentage of bid price below 10% of the project cost put to bid starting at 11% with the additional bid performance guarantee being 0.1% and this additional performance guarantee percentage shall be applied on the bid price.
▶ Where the bid price is 20% or more below of the project cost put to bid, the additional performance guarantee percentage shall be incremented by 0.2% for every percentage of bid price below 20% of the project cost put to bid in addition to 1% of the bid price and this additional performance guarantee percentage shall be applied on the bid price.
▶ The additional performance guarantee percentage shall be rounded off to the next lower percentage based on whether the decimal point of the percentage of bid price is below 0.5% or next higher percentage based on whether the decimal point of the percentage of bid price is 0.5% or more.
▶ The additional performance security shall be treated as part of the performance security.
The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on the website www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The Bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Website in the Office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Ganderal.

6. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical Bids.

7. The earnest money shall be forfeited if-
a). Any bidder/tenderer withdraws his bid/tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.
b). Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.
c). Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

No.:2048-53
Dated:- 21-05-2026

DIPK-1565-26
DT: 22/05/2026

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
R&B Division Ganderal

SC to Hear Plea Against CBSE's Class 9 Three-language Rule

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi- The Supreme Court on Friday said it will hear next week a plea challenging the new policy of CBSE which has made study of three languages, including at least two native Indian languages, compulsory for Class 9 students beginning July 1.

"This is an urgent PIL. The petitioners are students, teachers and parents. They are challenging the new policy of the CBSE by which in the 9th standard, two more languages have been made compulsory," Rohatgi said. Urging the top court to list the matter for hearing on Monday, Rohatgi said, "It will create a chaos".

The CJJ said next week will be a miscellaneous week and the matter would be listed. According to a recent circular issued by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the board has made the study of three languages, including at least two native Indian languages, compulsory for Class 9 students beginning July 1.

The move is part of the CB-



SE's alignment of its Scheme of Studies with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023.

"In order to adequately address the competencies envisaged at the Secondary Stage, these textbooks will be supplemented with one appropriate local or state literary material, selected by schools, such as short stories, poems, or non-fiction works," the board said.

It added that detailed guidelines regarding the selection and pedagogical use of supplementary literary material would be issued by June 15.

According to the circular issued on May 15, students opting for a foreign language may do so only as the third language after studying two native Indian languages, or as an additional fourth language.

"With effect from July 1, 2026, for Class IX, the study of three languages (R1, R2, R3) shall be compulsory, with at least two languages being native Indian languages," the circular said.

The board said till the dedicated R3 textbooks are available, Class 9 students shall use the Class 6 R3 textbooks (2026-27 edition) of the chosen language.

The CBSE said to keep the focus on learning and reduce any undue pressure on students, no board examination shall be conducted for R3 at the Class 10 level.

"All assessments for R3 shall be entirely school-based and internal. The performance of students in R3 will be duly reflected in the CBSE certificate. It is clarified that no student will be barred from appearing in the Class X Board Examinations due to R3. Sample question papers, rubrics for internal assessment will be shared by the board shortly," it added.

The board also asked schools to update their R3 language offerings for Classes 6 to 9 on the OASIS portal by June 30.

According to the board, Class 6 R3 textbooks in 19 scheduled languages will be made available to schools before July 1, while for the remaining native Indian languages, schools may use the available State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and state-level resources.

Police Warn Against Cockroach Party Demo in Bengaluru

Press Trust Of India

Bengaluru, May 22: The Bengaluru police on Friday cautioned the public against participating in or circulating social media messages related to a proposed "peaceful human chain" programme allegedly called by a group -- "Cockroach Janata Party Karnataka" -- near Town Hall here on May 24, saying no permission had been granted for such an event.

In a press note, the Bengaluru City Police said a viral social media post had invited people to gather in large numbers in front of Town Hall for a peaceful human chain demonstration on Sunday.

Police clarified that no application had been submitted by any individual, organisa-



tion or political party seeking permission to hold the programme and that no approval had been granted either by the police or by the GBA authorities for use of the venue.

"It has come to notice that a post has been circulated on social media under the heading 'Cockroach Janata Party, Karnataka', in which

an invitation has been given to gather in large numbers in front of Town Hall on May 24 for the purpose of forming a peaceful human chain," the police said.

According to the police statement, protests, sit-in demonstrations and rallies are not permitted at locations other than Freedom

Park in accordance with the Karnataka High Court's 1 August 2022 order.

The police said any gathering in front of Town Hall in violation of the order would amount to a breach of the court's directions.

The department advised the public not to knowingly or unknowingly forward or share the viral message through platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter and urged people not to assemble near Town Hall.

The viral poster, translated from Kannada, called upon supporters to show "The strength of cockroaches not just online but also on the streets" by participating in a peaceful human chain at Town Hall in Bengaluru at 11 am on May 24.

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EXPERIENCE TOP JEWELLERY
BRANDS UNDER ONE ROOF

21st - 24th May
2026
11 AM - 8 PM

RADISSON COLLECTION
HOTEL & SPA RIVERFRONT SRINAGAR

2 DAYS LEFT, HURRY UP !

DIAMOND | GOLD | SOLITAIRES
10,000+ DESIGNS | NATURAL DIAMONDS | BRIDAL COLLECTIONS

RSVP
750 81 9 1111

T&C APPLY

MI Securities

POWER OF ₹5,000 SIP

Step 1: You invest ₹5,000 every month

Step 2: You reinvest your total investment growth

| Duration (Years) | Total Invested Amount |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| 5 | 3.0L |
| 10 | 6.0L |
| 15 | 9.0L |
| 20 | 12.0L |
| 25 | 15.0L |
| 30 | 18.0L |

Small amount, big corpus

More time = more compounding

Mutual fund investments are subject to market risks. Read all scheme related documents carefully before investing.

MI Securities - AMFI Registered Mutual Fund Distributor | ARN: 47504 | Contact: 9419006271