

## Rain, Hail Lash Kashmir; Wet Spell Ahead

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Several parts of Kashmir witnessed hailstorms and heavy rainfall on Tuesday, bringing temporary relief from soaring temperatures, even as the Meteorological Department forecast a significant change in weather across Jammu and Kashmir from June 11.

According to reports, Shopian was hit by an intense hailstorm during the afternoon, while rain and hail were also reported from Banihal in Ramban district. Heavy rainfall occurred in parts of Kulgam and Bijbehara in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

Similar weather activity was reported from north Kashmir's Bandipora and Baramulla districts, where residents experienced a sudden change in conditions after a largely warm day.

The rainfall came amid prevailing heatwave conditions in several parts of the Union Territory, particularly in Jammu division. Udhampur continued to remain among the worst-affected areas as temperatures stayed above normal.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said temperatures across many parts of north India are likely to remain above normal till June 11, with daytime temperatures expected to rise by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius before witnessing a gradual decline.

Heatwave alerts remain in place for isolated areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, western Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

However, | [More on P10](#)

## Final Blast Connects Zojila Tunnel, Boosting Ladakh Connectivity



Observer News Service

Drass: The Rs 6,800-crore Zojila Tunnel project, set to become Asia's longest tunnel and a key all-weather link between Kashmir and Ladakh, achieved a major breakthrough on Tuesday as excavation teams met after blasting through the final 2.5 metres of rock inside the 13-kilometre tunnel.

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin

Gadkari performed the breakthrough blast at the project site located at an altitude of 11,578 feet above sea level, around 24 kilometres from Sonamarg and 103 kilometres from Srinagar.

The breakthrough marks a significant milestone in one of India's most challenging infrastructure projects, which is being constructed through the fragile Himalayan terrain to provide year-round connectivity between the Kashmir

Valley and the Union Territory of Ladakh.

Addressing reporters after the event, Gadkari described the tunnel as a lifeline for the people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

"This project is at a height of around 3,000 metres. The workers have contributed immensely, working in temperatures as low as minus 80 per cent of the workforce belongs to this region. | [More on P10](#)

## 'Golden Day' In India's Infrastructure History: Gadkari Announces Rs 1,500 Cr Four-Laning of 57-km Srinagar-Sonamarg Road

Observer News Service

Drass: Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday described the breakthrough achieved in the Zojila Tunnel project as a "golden day" in India's infrastructure history, saying the strategic project would emerge as a lifeline for the people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

The milestone was achieved after engineers blasted through the final stretch of rock inside the tunnel, connecting excavation works from both ends of the 13-km tunnel being built beneath the Zojila Pass.

"Today is a golden day in India's infrastructure history. I am happy that this state-of-the-art tunnel will become a lifeline for the people of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh," Gadkari said after performing the breakthrough blast.

The Union minister said the project, being constructed in extremely challenging weather and terrain conditions, would ensure all-weather connectivity between Kashmir and Ladakh, ending the seasonal isolation caused by heavy snowfall at the Zojila Pass.

Calling it a gift to the people of | [Full story on kashmirobserver.net](#)

## Year-Round Connectivity, Stronger Growth: LG

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday termed the breakthrough achieved in the strategically significant tunnel project connecting Kashmir and Ladakh a historic milestone and said it would usher in a new era of connectivity and development for the two Union Territories. | [Full story on kashmirobserver.net](#)

## Students, Patients and Businesses Will Benefit: CM

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday said the breakthrough achieved in the strategically important tunnel project linking Kashmir and Ladakh would bring transformative changes to the lives of people in the region, particularly in education, healthcare, | [Full story on kashmirobserver.net](#)

## India Urges Accountability For PoK Killings

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: India on Tuesday strongly criticised Pakistan over reports of violence against protesters in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), accusing Islamabad of attempting to divert attention from alleged human rights abuses and calling on the international community to hold it accountable.

The remarks came after reports suggested that more than 20 people were killed during police action against protesters in different parts of PoK.

Responding to questions during a media briefing, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Pakistan was resorting to misinformation campaigns to conceal its internal failures.

"We continue to see in this context a pattern of fake news and videos emanating from Pakistan. It is a desperate attempt by Pakistan to cover up its own failings and deflect attention away from its human rights abuses," Jaiswal said.

Referring to the reported violence, he said there were serious concerns over the treatment of protesters in the region.

"There are reports of severe police brutality in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir in which several protesters have been killed and many injured. We hope the international community will hold Pakistan accountable for its misdeeds and abuses," he added.

India's response came a day after the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) expressed | [More on P10](#)

## Payment Delays Push Private Hospitals Towards SEHAT Exit

JKPHDA announces de-empanelment from July 1, cites mounting financial strain

Move could impact dialysis, cancer care, cardiac treatment and other specialised services

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Private Hospitals and Dialysis Centres Association (JKPHDA) on Tuesday announced its decision to begin de-empanelment from the Ayushman Bharat-SEHAT Scheme from July 1, 2026, citing prolonged delays in reimbursement of claims, mounting financial stress and alleged non-compliance with agreed payment norms.

The Association warned that the move could affect healthcare delivery across Jammu and Kashmir, where private

hospitals play a major role in providing specialised services under the flagship health insurance scheme.

In a statement, JKPHDA said empanelled private healthcare institutions have continued to provide treatment under the scheme despite facing long delays in receiving payments for services already rendered.

"Private hospitals have continued to provide critical healthcare services in good faith and in the larger public interest. However, the prolonged blockage of legitimate reimbursements has reached an unsustainable level and is severely affecting the functioning of healthcare institutions across Jammu and Kashmir," a spokesperson of the Association said.

The Association said private hospitals remain at the forefront of specialised healthcare delivery, including dialysis, oncology treatment, intensive care services, emergency care, cardiac interventions, trauma management and major surgeries.

It said | [More on P10](#)

## Modi's 12 Yrs Integrated J&K With Mainstream India: Singh



Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Union minister Jitendra Singh on Tuesday said the 12-years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government integrated Jammu and Kashmir into India's mainstream journey.

In addition, J&K also benefited from the Modi government's transformative journey marked by decisive governance, infrastructure development, technological advancement and welfare schemes reaching the last mile, the minister of state in the prime minister's office (PMO) said in a special public outreach programme at Hiranagar in Kathua district.

"From empowering the poor and farmers to strengthening India's global standing, these years have laid a strong foundation for the vision of Viksit Bharat and created new opportunities for every citizen," Singh said.

He highlighted the transformative changes witnessed across the | [More on P10](#)

## Rs 2.47 Cr Chenab Flood Project Launched

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Tuesday launched a Rs 2.47 crore flood protection project at Fattu Kotli near Jammu to strengthen the left bank of the Chenab River and safeguard vulnerable areas from erosion and flood-related damage.

Jal Shakti Minister Javed Ahmed Rana laid the foundation stone for the restoration and construction works, which are aimed at improving riverbank stability and enhancing flood resilience in the area on the outskirts of Jammu.

Speaking on the occasion, Rana said strengthening flood management infrastructure remains a top priority for the government, particularly with the monsoon season approaching.

"The intervention at Fattu Kotli will bolster the resilience of vulnerable areas against flood threats and help protect lives, property and agricultural land," the minister said.

Rana, who also holds the portfolios of Forest, Ecology and Environment, and Tribal Affairs, stressed the need for durable and effective protective structures along vulnerable riverbanks to mitigate recurring flood risks.

He directed the concerned departments and executing agencies to ensure timely completion of the project while maintaining prescribed quality standards.

"There should be no | [More on P10](#)

## Ambulance Refusal Forces Pregnant Woman To Walk

CMO orders inquiry into allegations against staff

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Authorities have ordered an inquiry after a pregnant woman was allegedly forced to walk in search of medical assistance due to the non-availability of an ambulance in a remote village of Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district.

The inquiry was initiated after allegations surfaced that staff of the 108 ambulance service refused to travel to Tangar village to transport 23-year-old Nayeema Banoo, who reportedly developed pregnancy-related complications and required urgent medical attention.

According to local residents, Banoo's family contacted the emergency ambulance service after her condition worsened. The ambulance reportedly reached Dharamkund Zero Point on the Ramban-Gool Highway but did not proceed further towards the village.

Residents alleged that despite



repeated requests and being informed about the woman's condition, the ambulance staff declined to travel to Tangar village.

With no immediate transport available, Banoo and her attendants were allegedly left with no option but to undertake a difficult journey on foot before eventually finding a private vehicle that helped them reach the waiting ambulance.

She was later shifted to District Hospital | [More on P10](#)

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## SWD Organizes Outreach Programme at Tribal Research Institute

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Social Welfare Department (SWD) through SANKALP-hub for empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti Srinagar in collaboration with J&K Tribal Research Institute Srinagar, today organized an Awareness and Outreach Programme at Tribal Research Institute (TRI) Khimber aimed at enhancing awareness about various welfare schemes, educational opportunities, and socio-economic development initiatives for tribal communities.

The Programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, youth, community members, and members of the general public from the tribal belt. The event served as an important platform to disseminate information regarding government welfare Programmes and to encourage greater community engagement in developmental initiatives.

During the Programme, resource persons and officials highlighted various schemes and services available for tribal populations, with special emphasis on education, scholarships, skill development, social security, and empowerment

initiatives. Participants were encouraged to avail themselves of the benefits provided under different government Programmes designed for the welfare and upliftment of tribal communities.

Addressing the gathering, officials emphasized the importance of awareness and community participation in ensuring that the benefits of welfare schemes reach the intended beneficiaries. They reiterated the government's commitment to the inclusive development and empowerment of tribal communities across Jammu and Kashmir.

Interactive sessions were also conducted, allowing participants to raise queries and seek clarifications regarding various schemes and services. The Programme received a positive response from attendees, who appreciated the efforts of the Department of Social Welfare and the J&K Tribal Research Institute in reaching out directly to tribal populations.

The event concluded with a renewed commitment to continue such outreach initiatives for strengthening awareness, accessibility, and participation among tribal communities.

## Secretary DLSA Budgam visits Central Jail Srinagar



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** As per plan of action for the month of June 2026 issued by J&K Legal Services Authority, Secretary, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Budgam, conducted a visit to the Central Jail Srinagar to review the functioning of legal aid services and interacted with inmates.

The programme was conducted under the guidance of O.P. Baghat, Chairman DLSA (Principal District & Sessions Judge) Budgam. The visit was conducted in the presence of the Superintendent, Central Jail Srinagar, who accompanied the Secretary DLSA Budgam during the inspection of the Legal Aid Clinic, Mulaqati Area, and the awareness programme.

Amongst many good practices adopted by the jail administration, the Superintendent Central Jail Srinagar informed the Secretary, DLSA, Budgam, about the recent establishment of a separate cabin for breastfeeding mothers near the reception area of the jail. The Secretary appreciated this thoughtful and dignified initiative aimed at ensuring privacy, comfort, and convenience for breastfeeding mothers visiting the prison. The Secretary expressed satisfaction over this welfare-oriented measure and lauded the efforts of the jail authorities in creating a more inclusive and humane environment for visitors.

During the visit, the Secretary inspected the Legal Aid Clinic functioning within the

jail premises and assessed the legal assistance being provided to the inmates. The Secretary also visited the recently established Mulaqati Area and reviewed the facilities made available for prisoners and their visitors.

As part of the visit, a legal awareness programme was organized on the topics "Plea Bargaining" and "Rights of Prisoners." The programme aimed at sensitizing inmates about the legal remedies available to them and the rights guaranteed under law during incarceration.

Fozia Shafi, Assistant LADC Budgam and Minhaj, Assistant LADC Srinagar served as the resource persons for the programme who elaborated on the concept of plea bargaining, its legal framework, benefits, and procedure, while also educating the inmates about their fundamental and statutory rights as prisoners.

The Secretary interacted extensively with the inmates and apprised them of the current status of their respective cases. The inmates were encouraged to avail legal aid services whenever required and were assured of continued legal assistance through the Legal Services Institution.

The programme concluded with an interactive session wherein inmates raised various legal queries, which were addressed by the resource persons and officials present.

The initiative reflects the continued commitment of DLSA Budgam towards safeguarding the legal rights of prisoners and promoting legal awareness amongst the inmates.

## Muharram Preparations Reviewed in Srinagar; Deputy CM Stresses Inter-Departmental Coordination



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary undertook an extensive tour of several Shia-majority areas of Srinagar to review the arrangements being put in place for smooth and peaceful observance of the forthcoming holy month of Muharram-ul-Haram.

During the day-long visit, the Deputy Chief Minister inspected various Imam Baras and prominent religious sites, including the revered Shrine of Mir Shamsud-Din Araki (RA) at Zadibal, the historic Imam Bara Zadibal and historic Imam Bara Hassanabad. He assessed the facilities and services being arranged for the devotees and mourners during the holy month.

The Deputy Chief Minister, accompanied by MLA Hazratbal, Salman Ali Sagar and MLA Zadibal, Tanvir Sadiq, also visited Imam Bara Gulshan Bagh, Baghwanpora, Nawabagh in Lal Bazar and Bota Kadal, where he

interacted with the local representatives and residents to gather first-hand feedback regarding the ongoing preparations.

During the inspection, the Deputy Chief Minister directed the concerned departments to ensure seamless inter-departmental coordination and make all necessary arrangements for uninterrupted healthcare services, drinking water supply, electricity, sanitation, road connectivity, street lighting and other essential civic amenities.

"Deploy water tanks in all the affected areas on regular basis so that the residents do not face any inconvenience during the Muharram observance," he said.

The Deputy Chief Minister instructed the officers to maintain round-the-clock readiness and establish effective grievance redressal mechanism for prompt resolution of the public concerns.

Senior officers from various departments accompanied the Deputy Chief Minister during the visit and briefed him on the ar-

rangements and developmental works underway in their respective areas.

The Deputy Chief Minister assured the public that the government remains fully committed to ensure adequate facilities and a conducive environment for observance of Muharram-ul-Haram across J&K.

Later, the Deputy Chief Minister visited the Soura area and reviewed progress on key infrastructure projects, including the Donibagh-Soura road widening project. He directed the concerned authorities to remove the existing bottlenecks and encroachments hampering the pace of work. He stressed the need for ensuring smooth traffic movement and improved connectivity for the public.

He also reviewed the status of ongoing City Gateway development works in the Hazratbal and Zadibal areas and called for their timely completion while maintaining the highest standards of quality.

## NIT Srinagar, IIM Jammu Ink Pact to Accelerate Innovation

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** In a major step towards fostering interdisciplinary education, research excellence, innovation, entrepreneurship and regional development, National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu for establishing a comprehensive framework for long-term academic and institutional collaboration.

The MoU was formally exchanged in the presence of Prof. B. S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu, by Prof. (Dr.) Atikur Rehman, Cmdr. Kesavan Baskaran (Retd.), Chief Administrative Officer, IIM Jammu, In-charge Director and Dean R&C NIT Srinagar, Prof. Roohie Naaz Mir, Registrar NIT Srinagar, Prof. Atikur Rehman, Deputy Registrar Administration, Faisal Irshad Ganai, Project Engineer and Estate Officer, IIM Jammu, Iqbal Singh Sudan.

The partnership brings together two Institutes of National Importance under the Ministry of Education, Government of India, with a shared commitment to advancing the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and contributing to the educational, technological, entrepreneurial, and socio-economic development of the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, as well as the region at large.



Under the MoU, the two institutions will collaborate across a wide range of areas, including joint academic and research initiatives, consultancy projects, faculty and student exchange programmes, executive education, management development programmes, collaborative publications, case study development, boot camps, immersion programmes, innovation and incubation support, entrepreneurship promotion, faculty development initiatives, and the sharing of academic infrastructure and institutional resources.

A major highlight of the collaboration is the joint commitment to strengthening the innovation and startup ecosystem in Jammu & Kashmir.

The partnership will leverage IIM Jammu's expertise in management, strategy, entrepreneurship, and leadership development alongside NIT Srinagar's strengths in engineering, technology, applied sciences, and innovation.

The institutions will also explore opportunities for interdisciplinary learning pathways, collaborative degree programmes and future joint academic offerings aligned with the vision of NEP 2020.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. B. S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu, stated that the strategic partnership reflects the shared aspiration of both institutions to create meaningful academic and societal impact through collaboration. He emphasized that the convergence of management and technology is essential for addressing contemporary challenges and nurturing future-ready leaders.

He further noted that the MoU would catalyze innovation, entrepreneurship, research excellence, and capacity building, while contributing significantly to the socio-economic development of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh as emerging knowledge and innovation hubs.

- 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
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- BIJBERA: 01932-228243
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- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

**HIGHWAY STATUS**

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

**PRAYERS**

FAJR 3:34  
ZUHR 12:30  
ASR 5:29  
Magrib 7:44  
ISHA 9:24

**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
24 Zil-Hajj  
1447

*From KO Archives*

- 1190-Third Crusade: Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa drowns while crossing the Saleph River (modern Turkey) leading an army to Jerusalem
- 1358 - French Jacquerie peasant leader Guillaume Cale captured at the Battle of Mello
- 1538 - Catholic German monarchy signs League of Neuremberg
- 1539 - Council of Trent: Paul III sends out letters to his bishops, delaying the Council due to war and the difficulty bishops had traveling to Venice. 1538- Catholic German monarchy sign League of Neuremberg
- 1605 - False Dimitri I, an impostor, crowned Russian tsar (rules 1605-1606)
- 1610 - Thomas West, Baron de La Mar, is appointed governor of Virginia
- 1610 -1st Dutch settlers arrive (from NJ), to colonize Manhattan Island
- 1619 - Thirty Years&#39; War: Battle of Záblatí, a turning point in the Bohemian Revolt.
- 1624- Netherlands & France sign anti-Spanish Treaty of Compiègne
- 1760- NY passes 1st effective law regulating practice of medicine
- 1786- A landslide dam on the Dadu River caused by earthquake ten days earlier collapses, killing 100,000 in the Sichuan province of China
- 1801-Tripoli declares war on US for refusing tribute
- 1902- Patent for window envelope granted to H F Callahan
- 1907- France and Japan sign an agreement to maintain the independence and integrity of China, equality for all nations in trading with China, and the status quo in the Far East
- 1915- British/French troops conquer German colony of Cameroon
- 1916-Great Arab Revolt begins against ruling Ottoman turks
- 1931- Norway occupies East Greenland
- 1934-USSR & Romania re-establish diplomatic relations
- 1940- Italy declares war on France & Britain during WW II
- 1940-Norway surrenders to Nazis
- 1940- Canada declares war on Italy.
- 1943- FDR becomes 1st US president to visit a foreign country during wartime
- 1955- 1st separation of virus into component parts reported
- 1967 Israel, Syria, Jordan, Iraq & Egypt end &quot;6-Day War&quot; with UN help
- 1977- Apple Computer ships its first Apple II computers
- 1977- International LabourOrganisation and United Nations meet to discuss apartheid in South Africa and potential actions to prevent further violence and state repression.
- 1982- Israeli troops reach outskirts of Beirut
- 1984- US missile shoots down an incoming missile in space for first time

## Div Com Kashmir Reviews SMRDA Projects

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Tuesday chaired a high-level review meeting of the Srinagar Metropolitan Regional Development Authority (SMRDA) to assess the physical and financial progress of ongoing developmental projects.

The meeting was attended by the Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Commissioner Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL), Vice Chairman Srinagar Development Authority (SDA), Additional Deputy Commissioners of Srinagar and Budgam, Chief Engineer R&B, and senior officers of SMRDA.

During the meeting, SMRDA Officers presented comprehensive presentation outlining the status of various projects being executed through dif-



ferent implementing agencies. It was informed that a total Capex outlay of ₹2,702 lakh has been approved for the financial year 2025-26, against which ₹846 lakh has been released.

The meeting was informed that out of 15 ongoing projects, one project has been completed both physically and financially, while seven projects have achieved physical completion.

Additionally, six more projects are expected to be completed by the end of the financial year 2026-27.

On the occasion, The Div Com reviewed key infrastructure projects, including the upgradation of the General Bus Stand at Parimpora, upgradation of Transport Nagar at Parimpora under the SASCI Project, construction of community facilities and community halls in various parts of Srinagar, and several developmental works in Ganderbal and Budgam districts.

Emphasizing the need for accelerated execution, Anshul Garg directed the concerned agencies to ensure timely completion of all projects and maintain quality standards. He also approved the release of funds for ongoing works to facilitate their smooth and expeditious implementation.

**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,**  
**MECHANICAL IRRIGATION DIVISION SRINAGAR,**  
NEAR J&K BANK (ZALDAGAR)  
Telefax No. 0194-2952696 e.mail Id: to-extendrsrinagar@jk.gov.in

Sub: - Extension in bidding time for e-NIT No. 11 OF 2026-27, Dated:06-05-2026 for below mentioned work: -  
**Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 100 HP vertical hollow shaft 3 phase, 980 RPM induction motor for 20 cusec VT pump and allied works at LI/DWS Takanwari Old.**

Ref: - JK Government official e-Procurement portal Tender ID No.: - 2026\_IFC\_309428\_1

**EXTENSION NOTICE 3**

Due to No response to above mentioned e-NIT for the subject works, the critical dates are extended as under: -

Bid submission/ Document download / sale end Date	13/06/2026 at 1400 hrs
Date and time of Bid opening	15/06/2026 at 1230 hrs

Rest of the terms and conditions shall remain un-altered as laid down in the original e-NIT.

No. MIDS/Ts/1140-45  
Dated: - 08-06-2026  
DIPK-1950-26  
DT: 09/06/2026

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
Mechanical Irrigation Division  
Srinagar

## World Leaders Greet Modi on Becoming Longest-serving Elected PM

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has received warm congratulatory messages from some world leaders on the eve of his becoming the longest-serving elected prime minister of India.

Leaders from across the globe hailed Prime Minister Modi's "transformative governance", his advocacy for the Global South and his vision of an inclusive and economically dynamic India, an official



statement said.

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayaka, through a letter, conveyed warm congratulations of the government and people of Sri Lanka to Prime Minister Modi.

"This milestone is a testament not only to your years in office but also to the trust and confidence that the people of the world's largest democracy have repeatedly placed in your leadership," Disanayaka said.

The Sri Lankan president also highlighted India's remark-

able economic and social transformation and noted that Prime Minister Modi's vision has inspired many beyond India's borders, including Sri Lanka.

PM Modi visited Sri Lanka from April 4 to 6, 2025, his fourth visit to the island nation, during which he was conferred the 'Mitra Vibhushana', the island country's highest civilian honour accorded to a foreign dignitary.

The visit reaffirmed India's Neighbourhood First policy, with Sri Lanka among the closest beneficiaries of India's steadfast partnership, including India's pivotal support during Sri Lanka's economic difficulties in 2022.

Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea James Marape, in a personal video message, described Prime Minister Modi as "a role model and an example of leadership".

"Lifting over 200 million people out of poverty to good life today is an amazing feat," he said.

Prime Minister Marape expressed Papua New Guinea's warm friendship and its desire to further consolidate bilateral ties.

PM Modi's historic visit to Papua New Guinea in May 2023, the first-ever by an Indian prime minister, for the Third Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC-III) Summit was a landmark moment in India's engagement with the Pacific Island nations.

## Streets Deserted in PoK After JAAC's Protest Call

Sajjad Hussain

Islamabad, Jun 9 (PTI) Shops and markets remained closed on Tuesday in different parts of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir after a protest call by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), as over 20 people have reportedly been killed in recent police action in the region.

About 2,000 protesters associated with the JAAC launched a protest march from Bhimber and they would reach Mirpur for onward travel to Muzaffarabad, BBC Urdu reported.

It added that some protesters would reach Rawalakot and then proceed to Muzaffarabad. Police and security forces personnel are patrolling the roads and other areas.

JAAC has been staging protests demanding subsidised flour and electricity. The group was outlawed on Friday by authorities, citing concerns over public order and security.

The streets in Muzaffarabad were deserted, with hardly any vehicles on the roads, Dawn reported.

It added that riot police and paramilitary personnel remained deployed in the city. However, no protests were witnessed in the city.

It reported that hundreds of people had gathered in the Quid-i-Azam stadium of Mir-

pur, another major town of PoK.

"Shops are closed here, and traffic is off the roads," local journalist Sajjad Jarral told Dawn by telephone.

The legal fraternity of PoK boycotted judicial proceedings on the Bar Council's call to protest the alleged arrest of senior lawyer Amjad Ali Khan, a core member of the JAAC.

Pakistan's human rights body on Monday said that it was "deeply alarmed" by the ongoing violence in PoK during violent clashes.

Authorities on Tuesday announced a reward for those who helped in the arrest of the key leaders of the JAAC.

According to an official notification, a "Rs 10 million reward money" will be given to any person who provides information leading to the successful arrest of the central leaders of the JAAC, including Shaukat Nawaz Mir, Omar Nazir Kashmiri, Sardar Aman and Khawaja Mehran.

The notification states that the identity of those who provide information that helps in the arrest of the wanted persons will be kept confidential.

Meanwhile, PoK's so-called Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore urged a return to the negotiating table to end the tensions that have gripped the region over the past few days.

## Iran Draws a 'Security Belt' Across the World's Most Vital Waters

Quads Force commander Esmail Qaani says a new security belt will stretch from the Strait of Hormuz to Bab al-Mandeb and from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea.

"Borderless fighters are watching over your chokepoints. Continue your aggression, and they will seize you by the throat."

- ESMAIL QAANI, Commander, IRGC Quds Force

Tehran says allied forces will guard strategic waterways from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea.

The mischief of the Zionist regime and America in this region will be met with the reaction of the united Resistance Front.

Why it matters: Energy lifeline: Roughly 20% of the world's seaborne oil trade and 30% of global LNG transit the Strait of Hormuz.

Global trade artery: Nearly 10% of global seaborne trade passes through Bab al-Mandeb each year.

High stakes: Any disruption could force routing around Africa's Cape of Good Hope—adding thousands of miles and driving up global costs.

Rising tensions: Qatari news agency, based on U.S. aggression will trigger a coordinated response from Iran's allied forces across the region.

Iran announced the formation of a "new security belt" spanning two of the world's most strategically critical maritime chokepoints, the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandeb, warning that any future Israeli or U.S. military action in the region would trigger a coordinated response from Tehran's regional allies.

"From the Strait of Hormuz to Bab al-Mandeb and from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, a new security belt of the Resistance will be established," Major General Esmail Qaani, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, said in a statement carried by Iran's official IRNA news agency.

The proposed security framework would extend from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, underscoring Iran's growing emphasis on regional coordination among allied groups.

The announcement comes amid heightened regional tensions following a brief but intense exchange of missile and air strikes between Iran and Israel, triggered by Israeli

attacks on Beirut despite an existing ceasefire in Lebanon.

Qaani said recent military actions by Iran-aligned groups demonstrated increasing unity within what Tehran refers to as the "Resistance Front", a network that includes Hezbollah in Lebanon, Ansarallah in Yemen and other allied factions across the region.

"The timely and powerful action by heroic Yemen is a sign of the wisdom of the Resistance Front. If necessary, others will also join," he said.

His comments appeared to reference recent Yemeni operations in the Red Sea and against Israeli-linked targets, which Tehran has frequently cited as evidence of growing cooperation among resistance groups.

The shadowy Iranian commander also issued a direct warning to Israel and the United States, saying any further military escalation would draw a broader regional response.

"The mischief of the Zionist regime and America in this region will be met with the reaction of the united Resistance Front," Qaani said.

"Borderless fighters are watching over your choke-

points. If you continue your aggression, they will seize you by the throat."

The remarks highlight Iran's continuing effort to leverage strategic maritime routes as part of its broader deterrence strategy following months of regional conflict.

The Strait of Hormuz, located between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula, remains one of the world's most important energy corridors, serving as a transit route for a substantial share of global seaborne oil exports and liquefied natural gas shipments.

The Bab al-Mandeb Strait, situated between Yemen and the Horn of Africa, forms the southern gateway to the Red Sea and the Suez Canal route. Nearly 15% of global maritime trade passes through the waterway annually, making it a critical artery for international commerce.

Any disruption to either chokepoint could have significant consequences for global energy markets and supply chains, forcing vessels to re-route around Africa's Cape of Good Hope and adding considerable time and costs to international shipping.

## Iran Announces Security Belt From Hormuz to Red Sea.

Trans Asia News

Tehran - Iran on Monday announced the formation of a "new security belt" spanning two of the world's most strategically critical maritime chokepoints, the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandeb, warning that any future Israeli or U.S. military action in the region would trigger a coordinated response from Tehran's regional allies.

"From the Strait of Hormuz to Bab al-Mandeb and from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, a new security belt of the Resistance will be established," Major General Esmail Qaani, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, said in a statement carried by Iran's official IRNA news agency.

The proposed security framework would extend from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, underscoring Iran's growing emphasis on regional coordination among allied groups.

The announcement comes amid heightened regional tensions following a brief but intense exchange of missile and air strikes between Iran and Israel, triggered by Israeli

attacks on Beirut despite an existing ceasefire in Lebanon.

Qaani said recent military actions by Iran-aligned groups demonstrated increasing unity within what Tehran refers to as the "Resistance Front", a network that includes Hezbollah in Lebanon, Ansarallah in Yemen and other allied factions across the region.

"The timely and powerful action by heroic Yemen is a sign of the wisdom of the Resistance Front. If necessary, others will also join," he said.

His comments appeared to reference recent Yemeni operations in the Red Sea and against Israeli-linked targets, which Tehran has frequently cited as evidence of growing cooperation among resistance groups.

The shadowy Iranian commander also issued a direct warning to Israel and the United States, saying any further military escalation would draw a broader regional response.

"The mischief of the Zionist regime and America in this region will be met with the reaction of the united Resistance Front," Qaani said.

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points. If you continue your aggression, they will seize you by the throat."

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## Israeli Minister Suggests Seizing Lebanese Women to Pressure Hezbollah

Agencies

Jerusalem - Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has suggested abducting Lebanese women and youths as a means of exerting pressure on Hezbollah, according to remarks reported by the Jerusalem Post.

Speaking during a security cabinet meeting on Tuesday, Ben-Gvir urged officials to adopt more aggressive measures against the Lebanese group as discussions focused on expanding Israel's military operations in Lebanon.

"Let's start thinking outside the box about Hezbollah," Ben-Gvir said.

He argued that alongside capturing territory and killing Hezbollah fighters, Israel should also detain "their women and youth" and hold them in prisons.

"That's what hurts them the most," he said.



ISRAELI MINISTER CALLS FOR SEIZING LEBANESE WOMEN TO PRESSURE HEZBOLLAH

The proposal came as Israeli ministers debated broadening military action despite a U.S.-brokered ceasefire announced on April 17.

Since the 2024 war, Israeli forces have detained numerous Lebanese civilians, although the exact number remains unclear. They are among 1,316 individuals currently held under Israel's

"unlawful combatant" law, which also includes Palestinians from Gaza and Syrian nationals.

The legislation, enacted in 2002, allows for the indefinite detention of individuals without formal charges or trial. Detainees can be held for renewable periods without indictment, legal representation, or disclosure of their whereabouts.

## Christian Leaders in Tyre Demand Protection After Israeli Alert

MALAK HARB

Sidon, Jun 9 (AP) Christian religious leaders from Lebanon's southern port city of Tyre called on the international community and Lebanese officials on Tuesday to act quickly to prevent Israel from attacking the Christian district of the city, as airstrikes on nearby neighbourhoods killed dozens.

The Israeli military has issued an evacuation warning for the port city, including the Christian quarter, which has been spared so far.

The statement by the Christian leaders was from George Iskandar, the metropolitan archbishop of Tyre for the Melkite Greek Catholic Church; Elias Kfoury, the Greek Orthodox metropolitan of Tyre, Sidon and Dependencies; and Charbel Abdullah, the archbishop of the Maronite Catholic Archeparchy of Tyre.

The warning from Israel's military prompted hundreds of people to flee the Christian district along the Mediterranean coast, while members of the Civil Defense evacuated older people to safer areas.

Cars packed with mattresses, luggage and household belongings stretched for kilometers along Lebanon's coastal highway, as residents fled Tyre following the latest Israeli warning. Traffic ground to a halt as families crammed whatever they could into vehicles, with carpets protruding from rooftops, and trunks were left partially open to accommodate furniture and personal belongings.

An Israeli airstrike Tues-

day in another neighbourhood in Tyre killed eight people and wounded 32 others.

The three Christian leaders called on the international community and Lebanese leaders to "take immediate and serious action to spare the old quarter of Tyre from destruction and human tragedies."

The Israeli warning to Tyre came after Israel and Iran traded fire following Israel's targeting of Hezbollah in Beirut on Sunday, triggering heightened tensions in the Middle East and fears that the conflict could spread further.

Over the past few weeks, Israel's airstrikes have caused wide destruction in Tyre, the fourth-largest city in the country.

Considered one of the oldest metropolises of the world, Tyre has several archaeological sites, some of them submerged. The city was officially declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984.

"The old city is not merely a residential area," the clergy said in their statement. "It is the historical and human heart of Tyre, home to thousands of civilians, including families, children, and the elderly."

They said that the old quarter also holds a rich cultural, religious and civilizational heritage dating back centuries.

"Any targeting or destruction of this neighbourhood would constitute a humanitarian and national catastrophe with irreversible consequences," they warned.

Kfoury said that the ongoing conflict isn't only a war on Hezbollah.

## Over 700 Indian Sikh Pilgrims to Visit Lahore



M Zulqernain

Lahore, Jun 9 (PTI) Over 700 Sikh pilgrims from India are expected to arrive in Pakistan's Lahore city on Wednesday to participate in events related to the death anniversary of the fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev.

"The Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi has issued over 700 visas to Indian Sikh pilgrims to participate in the event to mark the death anniversary observances of Guru Arjan Dev Ji," Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) spokesperson Ghulam Mohayuddin told PTI on Tuesday.

He said the annual commemorative ceremonies of the revered Sikh guru will be held in Lahore from June 10-19.

He added that around 500 Sikhs from India are also expected to come here later this

month to observe the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The main ceremony of the event marking Guru Arjan Dev's death anniversary will be held at Gurdwara Dera Sahib, Lahore, on June 16.

Meanwhile, the ETPB officials reviewed arrangements at the Wagah Border for the reception and facilitation of Sikh pilgrims arriving from India on Wednesday.

At the meeting, officials also emphasised an uninterrupted power supply at the Wagah Border, the availability of backup generators, special cleanliness measures, and the provision of all necessary amenities.

The meeting was informed that the Federal Investigation Agency would establish 20 immigration counters to streamline and expedite the clearance process for the visiting pilgrims.

## NEWS MAKERS

## Mamata Meets Sonia Amid Rebellion in TMC

New Delhi, Jun 9 (PTI) A day after an opposition INDIA bloc meeting stressed unity and better coordination among the alliance partners, Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday met senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi at her 10, Janpath residence.

Sources said the two leaders are learnt to have discussed the strategy between the two parties going forward after the opposition bloc meeting, and following an exodus of Trinamool members after the party's defeat to the BJP in the recent Bengal polls.

The meeting followed after Gandhi, the chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party, and Banerjee met each



other warmly with a hug at the opposition bloc's meeting here on Monday.

The Congress shared pictures of the bonhomie between the two leaders.

The meeting comes in the wake of a rebellion within the Trinamool, with several

party MPs deciding to form a separate group and align with the ruling NDA.

A majority of Trinamool's 80 MLAs have already formed a separate group led by Ritabrata Banerjee as the leader of opposition in the state Assembly.

## Would-be Bride's Mother Runs Away with Lover, Ties Knot

Mumbai, Jun 9 (PTI) The reel tales of runaway brides might not enthrall people in real life anymore, but in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra, a would-be bride's mother married her lover, days before her daughter's engagement, evoking mixed reactions of ridicule and outrage.

According to police, the woman's second husband posted his wedding status on social media, prompting the bride's father to approach the police and request that the status be removed.

Police said the woman had not been living with her family for the past couple of months. During this period, the bride's father had been single-handedly raising their daughters.

He was making arrangements for

"The woman's second husband posted his wedding status on social media, prompting the bride's father to approach the police and request that the status be removed."

the upcoming engagement ceremony and wedding.

Following the father's request, police intervened, summoned the lover, and instructed him to remove the wedding status from his mobile account.

Officials said the bride's father did not file a formal complaint in connection with the incident.

## Modi Took No Leave in 12 Years: Shinde

Mumbai, Jun 9 (PTI) Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership and dedication, saying he has not taken a single leave since assuming the top office 12 years ago and will continue to lead the country in coming years.

Talking to reporters here, Shinde also slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his frequent overseas visits and for criticising Modi.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha keeps going aboard every two months and then defames the country and the PM, said the Shiv Sena leader whose party is a BJP ally.

He took a dig at the INDIA alliance, and said the DMK, which was earlier associated with the Opposition bloc, and the TVK, which heads the new government in Tamil Nadu, skipped the meeting of the grouping held in New Delhi on June 8.

Even leaders like Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray were present online instead of meeting face to face, he noted.

## Strict NDPS Action, Public Participation Key to Combat Drug Menace: IGP Kashmir



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir V.K. Birdi on Tuesday said strict action against drug peddlers under the NDPS Act and PIT-NDPS law and active public participation are crucial to effectively combat the drug menace in Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking at a programme organised by the Central Government Pensioners Welfare Association in Kothibagh, the IGP, as reported by KNO, said J&K Police has been continuously acting tough against drug peddlers and smugglers under stringent legal provisions.

"The police are taking strict action under NDPS and PIT-NDPS laws. But this is not a fight that can be won by enforcement alone. Society's participation is equally important," Birdi said.

He said the approach towards drug abuse in society has evolved over time, noting a shift from "denial mode to acceptance mode," which has helped in better identification and response to drug-related issues.

"People are now aware and coming forward. Once the problem is acknowledged, resolution becomes possible with collective efforts of police, family members, teachers

and society at large," he added. Referring to the Nasha Mukta Bharat campaign, the IGP said it is not merely a government initiative but a people-driven movement witnessing voluntary participation across society. "This is a collective fight. Police, administration and society all have defined roles," he said.

The Kashmir police chief appreciated the initiative of involving youth and stakeholders in awareness programmes, saying such efforts will strengthen long-term social responsibility and community engagement.

On upcoming arrangements, the IGP said preparations for the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra are underway, along with coordination meetings for the upcoming Muharram, ensuring smooth arrangements and public convenience.

"The district administrations are actively engaging with local committees to ensure peaceful observance of Muharram and hassle-free conduct of the Yatra," he said.

Responding to queries on digital governance, Birdi said initiatives like pension apps reflect the use of technology for improved service delivery and similar systems are being explored in other districts as well.

## J&K Govt Appoints Suresh Kumar Gupta as SWRRA Chairperson

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu & Kashmir on Tuesday appointed Suresh Kumar Gupta, a retired Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer, as chairperson of J&K State Water Resources Regulatory Authority.

In an order, a copy of which in possession of Kashmir Observer, Gupta has been appointed a head of the J&K State Water Resources Regulatory Authority.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by section 139 of the Jammu and Kashmir Water Resources (Regulation and Management) Act, 2010, the Government of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir hereby appoint Mr. Suresh Kumar Gupta, IFS (Rtd.), as Chairperson of the Jammu and Kashmir Water Resources Regulatory Authority," reads notification, a copy of which is in possession of news agency- Kashmir News Observer.

According to the notification, the appointment of Chairperson shall take effect from the date he assumes the charge of the post in the Authority.



The Government has also appointed Manoj Gupta, Chief Engineer as Member of the Jammu and Kashmir Water Resources Regulatory Authority.

With these appointments, the number of members which including chairperson has gone upto three. Rajesh Sharma, a former IAS officer, is currently serving as member and was appointed in 2024.

Jammu & Kashmir State Water Resources Regulatory Authority is a quasi-judicial body mandated to regulate, manage, and ensure the sustainable use of water resources across the Union Territory. It sets tariffs, monitors projects, resolves disputes, and advises the government on conservation and long-term water management strategies.

## Gulmarg Gondola Closure Extended Indefinitely

JKCCC Cites Ongoing Maintenance, Safety Assessments

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir Cable Car Corporation (JKCCC) has extended the closure of the Gulmarg Gondola indefinitely, two weeks after a major technical malfunction left more than 300 tourists stranded mid-air and triggered a massive rescue operation.

In a fresh communication, the corporation, as per KNO, stated that the Gondola will remain closed for tourists until further notice as maintenance and safety assessments continue. "The inconvenience caused is regretted", reads an official communique.

The Gondola has remained non-operational since May 25, when a technical snag halted services and trapped over 300 tourists in suspended cabins.

A detailed technical inspection of



the cable car system followed, while engineers have since been carrying out extensive maintenance work, safety audits and operational checks to ensure the facility is fit for public use before services are restored.

The latest announcement comes days after JKCCC had indicated that

the Gondola would remain closed till June 8. However, with maintenance work still underway, the corporation has now withheld any specific timeline for reopening.

Officials said services will resume only after all technical issues are addressed and the system receives the necessary safety clearances.

## Bandipora Celebrates as NHAI Invites Bids for Sumbal-Gurez Highway DPR

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Residents in north Kashmir's Bandipora district celebrated on Tuesday after the National Highways Authority of India (NHA) invited bids for preparing a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the proposed Sumbal-Bandipora-Gurez National Highway, a project long sought by locals.

According to KNO, people gathered in various parts of the district, distributed sweets and burst firecrackers to mark what they described as a major step towards improving connectivity in the region.

Bandipora MLA Nizamuddin Bhat termed the development a "people's victory" and said the progress reflected years of collective efforts by residents.

"The people remained united on this issue and consistently raised their demand. The process has now moved forward, and the credit goes to the people of Bandipora," Bhat told reporters.

He appealed to residents to keep



the issue above political considerations and said development projects should not become subjects of political rivalry.

According to Bhat, the proposed highway has the potential to transform connectivity between Srinagar, Bandipora and the border district of Gurez, besides creating opportunities in tourism, trade and employment.

Gurez, located close to the Line of Control (LoC), remains cut off from the Kashmir Valley for extended periods during winter because of heavy snowfall and road closures. Residents have for years demanded

improved road infrastructure and reliable all-weather connectivity.

The NHA's decision to initiate the DPR process marks the first formal step towards the execution of the highway project. Residents expressed hope that the proposal would now move swiftly through the remaining stages of approval and implementation.

Meanwhile, Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) chief spokesperson Inam Un Nabi welcomed the development and said the proposed road would benefit thousands of people in the region.

He claimed that MP Engineer Rashid had raised the issue of road connectivity to Gurez during a meeting with Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari in Parliament last year and sought priority for the project.

The initiation of the DPR process is a positive development for Bandipora and Gurez and could improve accessibility while boosting tourism and economic activity in the area, Nabi said.

## Will Join NC's Statehood Protest: MP Ruhullah

**SRINAGAR:** Member of Parliament (MP), Aga Ruhullah Mehdi on Tuesday said he would participate in the National Conference's proposed protest for statehood at Jantar Mantra in New Delhi, but asserted that restoration of Article 370 remains his primary political demand.

"The struggle for Jammu and Kashmir's rights cannot be limited to a one-day demonstration or the demand for statehood alone," Ruhullah, as per KNO said, speaking to reporters in Pulwama.

The MP said he would "definitely" join the protest planned by the NC. "However, the political aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir extend beyond the restoration of statehood and include the reinstatement of constitutional protections that existed before August 2019," he stressed.

Mehdi said that while the demand for statehood is important, it should not overshadow what he described as the larger political and constitutional issues facing the region. According to him, a single protest or symbolic political event would not be sufficient to address the concerns of the people; instead called for a sustained, organised and long-term political movement. "The struggle should focus on securing justice, protecting rights and addressing the 'erosion' of constitutional safeguards," he said.

Highlighting the challenges faced by the younger generation since the constitutional changes of 2019, the MP said justice remains a prerequisite for achieving lasting peace in the region. He observed that many young people continue to face uncertainty and frustration, and that their concerns require serious political attention.

Ruhullah also raised concerns over issues related to land rights, employment opportunities and reservation policies. He alleged that local residents were increasingly being deprived of opportunities that rightfully belonged to them and expressed concern over policies that, according to him, have adversely impacted sections of the population. (Observer News Service)

## Private Hospitals Threaten Ayushman Bharat-SEHAT Exit over Dues

**SRINAGAR:** The J&K Private Hospitals and Dialysis Centres Association (JKPHDA) has announced its proposed de-panelsment from the Ayushman Bharat-SEHAT Scheme with effect from July 1, 2026, citing prolonged delays in reimbursement of claims, financial distress, and alleged non-compliance with National Health Authority (NHA) guidelines. The development could significantly impact healthcare delivery across Jammu and Kashmir.

JKPHDA said that despite repeated representations, empanelled private healthcare institutions continue to face long delays in receiving payments for services already rendered under the scheme.

"Private hospitals have continued to provide critical healthcare services in good faith and in the larger public interest. However, the prolonged blockage of legitimate reimbursements has reached an unsustainable level and is severely affecting the functioning of healthcare institutions across Jammu and Kashmir," a spokesperson of the Association told KNO.

The Association said that private hospitals play a crucial role in delivering specialised healthcare services, including dialysis, oncology treatment, intensive care, emergency services, cardiac interventions, trauma care, and major surgical procedures. "Maintaining these services requires uninterrupted procurement of medicines, consumables, implants, diagnostic equipment and the retention of skilled healthcare professionals. Delayed reimbursements directly affect our ability to meet these obligations," the spokesperson added. (Observer News Service)

## CS Calls for Proactive Disaster Mitigation Measures

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** In view of the floods and other natural calamities witnessed in several parts of Jammu and Kashmir last year, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo chaired a high-level meeting to review the preparedness of various departments and agencies for dealing with disasters and emergencies during the forthcoming monsoon season.

The meeting was attended by senior Administrative Secretaries, Commandant SDRF, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu/Kashmir; IGP, Kashmir/Jammu; Chief Executive Officer ERA, Managing Director, JPDCI/KPDCI; Chief Engineer, Project Sampark/Beacon, besides all Deputy Commissioners who joined from their respective districts.

Emphasising the need for proactive planning and preparedness, the Chief Secretary directed the Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Department (DMRR&R), divisional administrations and district authorities to



take all necessary preventive measures well in advance to minimise the loss of life and property in the event of floods, flash floods, landslides, cloudbursts and other natural disasters.

Drawing lessons from past experiences, Dulloo stressed that preparedness should not be limited to departmental arrangements alone but must be complemented by robust inter-agency coordination. He observed that effective coordination among departments, emergency responders and district administrations remains the key to successful disaster response, relief, restoration and rehabilitation efforts.

The Chief Secretary called for comprehensive mapping of vulnerable areas based on

disaster risk profiles and topographical conditions. He directed the concerned authorities to identify hazard-prone locations and formulate mitigation strategies accordingly.

Underscoring the importance of safeguarding public infrastructure, Dulloo instructed departments to undertake safety audits of schools, hospitals and other high-footfall government buildings.

He further directed agencies including BRO, NHAI, PWD and other road construction organisations to ensure swift restoration of roads and connectivity during emergencies, noting that uninterrupted access is critical for rescue and relief operations.

The Chief Secretary also emphasised expeditious

completion of all works related to permanent restoration of infrastructure damaged during previous disasters. He asked the Power Development Department to carry out detailed risk assessments of its assets and installations to minimise vulnerabilities and ensure uninterrupted services during adverse weather conditions.

During the meeting, the Administrative Secretaries, including the Additional Chief Secretary, Power Development Department, and Additional Chief Secretary, Public Works Department, presented detailed assessments of measures undertaken to protect critical infrastructure and accelerate restoration works damaged in earlier calamities.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

### DIRECTORATE OF TOURISM, KASHMIR

Tel / Fax 0914 - 2502279 / 2502281

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**E- Bid Document (Auction ID: \_\_\_\_\_)**

**Out-sourcing of "05 rooms in Shopping Arcade at Bijbehara, Anantnag" for a period of 03 years (extendable upto 05 years) on License Basis through GeM Portal.**

**No: Estates / 137-B / DTK / 230 dated-08/06/2026**

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of J&K Union Territory, e - bids are invited online through GeM Portal for Out-sourcing of "05 rooms in Shopping Arcade at Bijbehara, Anantnag" on License Basis through GeM Portal. The details are as under:

S.No	Particulars	Date/Amount	Remarks
1	PQ (Pre-Qualification) Submission Start Date	11.06.2026 10:00 AM	NII
2	PQ (Pre-Qualification) Submission End Date	16.06.2026 04:00 PM	NII
3	PQ (Pre-Qualification) Assessment End Date & Time	17.06.2026 04:00 PM	NII
4	EMD Start Date	19.06.2026 10:00 AM	NII
5	EMD End Date	23.06.2026 4:00 PM	NII
6	EMD (Bid Security) Amount in shape of CDR/FDR/DD	Rs. 22,500 /- (Rupees Twenty Two Thousand and Five Hundred Only)	To be pledged in favour of Accounts Officer, Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir.
7	Bid Submission/Auction Start Date	25.06.2026 10:00 AM	NII
8	Bid Submission/Auction End Date & Time	29.06.2026 4:00 PM	NII
9	Reserve Bid Amount	Rs.2,25,000/- (Rupees Two Lakh and Twenty Five Thousand Only)	NII
10	Bidding Time Extension	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

The e-auction shall be finalized by the Outsourcing Committee under the Chairmanship of Director Tourism, Kashmir. Reliable/resourceful and experienced agencies/persons, who fulfill the ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (PRE QUALIFICATION) detailed as under shall only be eligible to participate in the e - bidding process.

**PRE -QUALIFICATION (PQ) CRITERIA (TO BE UPLOADED ON GEM PORTAL)**

- The bidder should be a domicile of J&K shall upload a valid domicile certificate.
- The bidder shall have to upload a valid Character Certificate from Revenue Department.
- The bidder shall have to upload PAN Card & Aadhar Card.
- The bidder shall have to upload PAN Card & Aadhar Card.

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS.**

- The bidder participating in the e-bid process must apply in his name or the firm duly registered in his name. There is no scope whatsoever of executing any partnership deed in the outsourcing deed.
- The Minimum Reserve Bid for the said asset is fixed at Rs.2,25,000/- (Rupees Two Lakh and Twenty Five Thousand Only) per annum, and the final bid amount offered by the bidders shall in no case be below the said Minimum Reserve Bid.
- The final/successful bid amount shall be subject to a compound escalation of 10% for each successive year, and the successful bidder shall deposit the yearly bid amount in advance before the commencement of each year.
- The interested parties shall compulsorily visit and inspect the asset before participating in the e-bidding process. The asset shall be allotted on "as is where is and whatever there is basis," and the bidders shall be deemed to have satisfied themselves about its physical condition and suitability. No claim regarding any deficiency, alteration, repair, or rectification shall be entertained during or after the bidding process. The asset shall be outsourced on license basis for an initial period of three (03) years from the date of issuance of the formal allotment letter/order, extendable for a further period of two (02) years subject to satisfactory performance and fulfillment of the terms and conditions, making a maximum period of the (05) years.
- Only those bidders shall be allowed to participate in the e-bidding process who qualify the pre-qualification stage after submission of the documents mentioned in the Eligibility Criteria. The bidders so qualified shall be required to submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in the shape of CDR amounting to Rs. 22,500 /- (Rupees Twenty Two Thousand and Five Hundred Only) pledged in favour of the Accounts Officer, Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir.
- The successful bidder shall deposit 100% of the successful bid amount for the first year within seven (07) days from the date of issuance of the Intimation Letter (generated through the GeM Portal).
- In case the successful bidder fails to deposit the said amount within the stipulated period, the allotment shall be cancelled and the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) shall be forfeited in favour of the Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir, and the bidder shall have no claim whatsoever on the allotment of the asset.
- In case the successful bidder fails to deposit the required amount within the stipulated period, the allotment shall be cancelled and the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) shall be forfeited. The 2nd highest bidder may be offered the opportunity to match the highest bid amount and accept the allotment on the same terms and conditions, subject to approval of the competent authority and in the interest of the Government.
- In case the Licensee fails to complete the term of the contract, abandons the contract midway, or the contract is cancelled due to violation of the terms and conditions, the CDR shall be forfeited in favour of the Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir.
- The Licensee shall insure the property through any Nationalized Insurance Company in the name of the Director Tourism, Kashmir, for which a letter of authority shall be issued by this office. The insurance premium shall be borne by the Licensee.
- The safety, security and upkeep of the asset shall be sole responsibility of licensee during the period of contract.
- The Departmental Outsourcing Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any or all e-bids without assigning any reason thereof.
- The Licensee shall charge rates for the services offered only as approved by the concerned Department from time to time.
- The electricity and water consumption charges shall be payable by the Licensee. Electric sub-meter, wherever applicable, shall be installed by the Licensee at his/her own cost.
- The Licensee shall not be an employee of any Government Department or Public Sector Undertaking.
- The successful bidder shall execute an agreement/ license deed with the Department on a non-judicial stamp paper regarding adherence to the instructions, terms and conditions as may be prescribed by the Department during the contract period. The cost and expenses for execution of the said agreement/ license deed shall be borne by the bidder.
- The successful bidder shall provide the requisite services for the entire period of the license and not on a seasonal basis only.
- The successful bidder shall be obligated to make arrangements for the safe disposal of solid and liquid waste and to comply with all requirements relating to pollution control and environmental protection.
- The Licensee shall hand over the property to the Tourism Department upon completion of the contract period, along with the inventory received at the time of allotment/taking over the asset.
- The Licensee shall not make any alterations or additions to the allotted space/unit without obtaining prior written permission from the competent authority of the Department.
- The Licensee shall arrange, at their own cost, all necessary stationary, staff, and other requirements for providing efficient services to the clients.
- The watch and care of the property, maintenance of lawns and landscape, and upkeep of the asset shall be the sole responsibility of the Licensee. No departmental employees shall be posted or stationed at the site for these purposes.
- The Licensee shall not, under any circumstances, sub-let or transfer the premises to any other party. The Licensee shall vacate the premises on the expiry of the license period. However, if the Licensee intends to surrender the asset before the expiry of the license period, he/she shall give three (03) months' advance notice to the Licensor, and the date of submission of such notice shall be treated as the effective date for calculation of the notice period. The Licensee shall deposit the license fee for the period during which the asset was utilized. In case the Licensee has already deposited the license fee for the full year, the amount so deposited shall not be refunded. During the notice period, the Licensee shall continue to operate and maintain the asset in accordance with the prescribed terms and conditions.
- The Licensee shall provide uniforms and name plates to all staff and ensure their proper conduct and discipline. The Licensee shall provide services to the satisfaction of tourists and locals and shall be fully responsible for any act or omission by the staff, with penalties or action taken under applicable rules and laws in case of complaints.
- The Licensee shall be inspected periodically by departmental officers, and if the services of the Licensee are not found satisfactory, the contract shall be liable for cancellation without any further notice.
- Any damage caused to the Government property at the site shall attract a penalty equal to double the cost of repair or replacement, as assessed by the Engineering Wing of the Tourism Department.
- The Department reserves the right to use the premises for any purpose, function, or event as it deems fit, and the Licensee shall not charge any fee in this regard.
- The Licensee shall comply with all orders and communications issued by the Department from time to time during the contract period, including those pertaining to public law and order, security, or any other administrative requirements.
- The Licensee shall maintain the site with the daily staff of the Tourism Department, if any, stationed at the site, for matters related to the services in the allotted asset.
- The Licensee shall arrange, at their own cost, furniture, electricity backup, and other necessary facilities in the unit.
- The offer shall be unconditional. Any conditional offer shall be rejected outright.
- In the event of any dispute arising between the parties, the same shall be referred to arbitration. The Director Tourism, Kashmir, shall act as the Arbitrator, and their decision shall be final and binding on both parties.
- The Licensee shall carry out minor repairs of departmental assets, such as electrification, sanitary maintenance, etc., at their own cost, after obtaining prior permission from the competent authority and as per the directions of the inspecting authority from time to time, to ensure proper maintenance of the asset.
- The Licensor shall have the right to cancel the contract at any time without issuing any notice if the Licensee is found to be involved in any activity detrimental to the interests of the State.
- A gestation period of forty-five (45) days or the actual commencement of commercial operations, whichever is earlier, shall be permitted to the Licensee.
- No extension of the license period shall be granted. The asset shall be outsourced afresh through a new process at the expiry of the license term.
- The Department shall not be responsible for any loss caused to the Licensee due to natural calamities, law and order situations, curfews, restrictions imposed by the Government, or any other force majeure circumstances.
- The Licensee must install and operate a 24/7, high-resolution CCTV system covering all entry, exit, and public areas, retaining footage for at least 30 days as per the guidelines issued by the government. The Licensee shall be personally responsible and liable for non-compliance.

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### KO VIEW

## Light Through Zojila

June has once again brought light to the end of a tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir.

This time, that light shines through Zojila, a mountain pass that has framed the fortunes of Kashmir and Ladakh for generations.

The breakthrough achieved in the 13.15-kilometre Zojila Tunnel marks a defining moment in a project that promises to change everyday life in one of the world's most challenging landscapes.

For decades, winter weather dictated the limits of movement between Kashmir and Ladakh. Heavy snowfall frequently closed the Zojila Pass, cutting the principal road link between the two regions for extended periods.

Travel plans depended on forecasts, supply chains depended on road conditions, and economic activity depended on the mercy of the season.

Such dependence came at a cost. A truck delayed by road closures affects businesses, a disrupted journey affects families, and a difficult trip affects access to healthcare, education and employment. Geography influences every mountain region, but modern infrastructure can reduce its grip on daily life.

That is precisely what the Zojila Tunnel is set to accomplish.

Built at nearly 11,600 feet above sea level, the tunnel will provide year-round connectivity between Baltal and Minimarg while reducing travel time through the pass from well over an hour to roughly fifteen minutes.

What appears on paper as a transport project will function in practice as an economic corridor, a social connector and a permanent link between neighbouring regions whose relationship has long been defined by difficult terrain.

Its significance becomes even clearer when viewed alongside the broader transformation unfolding in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Chenani-Nashri Tunnel shortened travel on the Jammu-Srinagar highway and improved reliability on a stretch once known for frequent disruptions. The Banihal-Qazigund Tunnel strengthened access to the valley and reduced the impact of harsh weather on movement through the Pir Panjal mountains.

New tunnels, viaducts and highway upgrades continue to improve connectivity along vital routes linking communities, markets and institutions.

Together, these projects reveal a larger story: mountain roads that once closed with alarming regularity are gradually giving way to dependable transport corridors. Journeys that demanded uncertainty increasingly rest on predictability.

Economic research consistently links improved transport infrastructure with higher productivity, lower logistics costs, stronger regional trade and better access to public services. Mountain economies often experience these gains more sharply because distance and terrain impose greater costs on people and businesses.

Ladakh stands to benefit enormously from that shift. Tourism can operate with greater certainty, trade can move more efficiently, and access to essential services can improve throughout the year. Investment decisions become easier when connectivity remains dependable regardless of season.

But still, the most enduring impact may emerge in less measurable ways. Roads and tunnels strengthen human connections. They allow families to meet more often, encourage cultural exchange, deepen commercial relationships, and help neighbouring regions feel closer to one another despite the mountains that separate them.

The Himalayas will always define this part of the world. Peaks will remain imposing, and winters will remain severe, but a route that once symbolised seasonal isolation is steadily becoming a symbol of continuity.

Light emerging through the length of the Zojila Tunnel therefore represents much more than progress beneath a mountain.

It signals a future where opportunity travels more freely, distance exerts less influence on daily life, and Kashmir and Ladakh stand connected through every season of the year.

# The Factory-to-Fuel Breakthrough

Industrial waste heat has long been treated as a byproduct. A breakthrough in hydrogen production suggests it could become one of the clean-energy transition's most valuable assets.



Dr Vijay Garg

Hydrogen has long occupied a special place in discussions about the future of clean energy.

Scientists and industry leaders see it as a fuel capable of reducing emissions in sectors where electrification faces practical limits.

Heavy manufacturing, shipping and long-duration energy storage all stand to benefit from hydrogen's potential.

One stubborn obstacle, however, has slowed its rise: producing hydrogen at a price and scale that can compete with conventional fuels.

A breakthrough from researchers at the University of Birmingham suggests that obstacle may become far less daunting.

The research centers on a new perovskite-based catalyst that can split water into hydrogen at temperatures far lower than those demanded by conventional thermochemical processes.

Existing systems typically operate between 700 and 1,000 degrees Celsius and often need even higher temperatures to regenerate catalysts.

Such extreme heat drives up energy consumption and costs, limiting widespread adoption.

Lowering those temperature requirements changes the equation.

Hydrogen production becomes more efficient, less energy-intensive and potentially far more economical. That achievement alone would attract global attention.

The true significance of this development, however, lies in where the energy can come from.

Modern industry generates enormous quantities of excess heat every day. Steel plants, cement factories, glass manufacturers and chemical-processing facilities release vast amounts of thermal energy into the environment after production processes are complete.

Much of that heat simply dissipates into the atmosphere. Industrial facilities treat it as an unavoidable byproduct rather than a useful resource.

The Birmingham breakthrough views that wasted heat through a different lens.

Instead of allowing valuable energy to disappear, the new catalyst creates a pathway to convert it into hydrogen fuel.

That idea speaks to a larger principle that often drives technological progress.

Transformative advances frequently emerge when innovators discover value in resources previously ignored.

Industrial waste heat exists in abundance. Turning it into clean fuel converts a long-standing inefficiency into an economic and environmental asset.

The benefits extend well beyond hydrogen production itself.

Using waste heat improves overall energy efficiency



within industrial facilities. Every unit of energy recovered from existing operations reduces the need for additional energy inputs. Lower production costs could make hydrogen more competitive with fossil-fuel-based alternatives, helping accelerate adoption in sectors seeking practical decarbonization solutions.

Local hydrogen generation also creates another advantage.

Producing fuel directly at industrial sites reduces dependence on extensive transportation networks and large storage systems.

Hydrogen distribution remains a significant challenge because moving and storing the gas can be costly and technically demanding. Production close to the point of use helps ease those constraints.

The catalyst's composition strengthens its commercial appeal.

Many advanced energy technologies depend on rare or expensive materials that complicate large-scale deployment. Researchers report that this catalyst relies on relatively abundant and non-toxic elements. Early testing also indicates stable performance through repeated production cycles, a crucial consideration for industries evaluating long-term investments.

Economic assessments provide additional encouragement. Preliminary analyses suggest that the process could compete with both green hydrogen and blue hydrogen pathways.

Such findings need careful scrutiny through further testing, though they point toward a future where cleaner hydrogen becomes financially attractive rather than dependent on extensive subsidies.

The broader climate implications are difficult to overstate.

Many countries have established net-zero goals and continue searching for technologies capable of delivering substantial emissions reductions without disrupting economic growth.

Hydrogen occupies a central position in many of those plans because certain sectors demand energy solutions beyond direct electrification.

Steelmaking, maritime transport and large-scale

energy storage each present challenges that hydrogen can help address.

Affordable hydrogen expands options for industries seeking practical pathways toward lower emissions while maintaining productivity and competitiveness.

Progress in hydrogen production therefore holds significance far beyond the laboratories where breakthroughs originate.

But challenges remain before this technology reaches widespread commercial use.

Researchers must demonstrate reliable performance under real industrial conditions and over extended operating periods. Scaling laboratory success into full-scale deployment often reveals engineering hurdles that initial studies cannot fully predict.

Investment, supportive policy frameworks and infrastructure development will also influence the pace of adoption.

Those realities should inspire careful planning rather than skepticism.

The strongest climate solutions combine environmental benefits with economic logic. This innovation appears to do exactly that.

It captures energy already being generated, converts it into a valuable fuel and creates opportunities for industries to improve efficiency while reducing emissions.

Such a combination rarely emerges in energy transitions.

History often rewards ideas that transform waste into value. The University of Birmingham's breakthrough follows that tradition with remarkable promise. Turning excess industrial heat into clean hydrogen could help unlock a more practical and affordable path toward decarbonization.

A world searching for workable climate solutions may find one of its most powerful answers rising from the heat already pouring out of factory walls.

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# The Power of Eye Donation

June 10 marks World Eye Donation Day, a reminder that ending much of India's corneal blindness depends as much on public participation as medical expertise.



Lalit Garg

Every year, World Eye Donation Day dawns with a simple question that cuts to the heart of what it means to be human: What remains of us after we are gone?

Many answers focus on wealth, achievements, or legacy. Eye donation points toward something far more tangible. It gives another person the ability to see.

Few acts create such a direct connection between one life ending and another beginning anew.

Human eyes connect us to family, learning, work, community, and the beauty of the world itself. Through sight, a child discovers knowledge, a student pursues ambition, a parent earns a livelihood, and an older person maintains independence.

Vision opens doors to experiences that many take for granted. Loss of sight closes those doors and narrows opportunities that should belong to everyone.

That reality gives special significance to World Eye Donation Day.

The occasion highlights a profound humanitarian cause and asks society to convert compassion into action.

The scale of the challenge is immense and immediate.

According to the World Health Organization, millions of people around the globe live with visual impairment and blindness. India accounts for a significant share of that burden.

Large numbers of people lose vision because of corneal disease, a condition that often has a highly effective treat-

ment. Corneal transplantation ranks among the most successful procedures in modern medicine, with success levels reaching between 95 and 98 percent.

Such figures tell a remarkable story.

Medical science has largely solved the problem, hospitals possess the expertise, surgeons possess the skills, and technology continues to improve outcomes. But a different obstacle stands in the way: the shortage of donated corneas.

Thousands of patients spend years waiting for a transplant that could restore their sight. Every waiting list represents interrupted education, reduced employment opportunities, greater dependence on family members, and diminished participation in community life.

Every unavailable cornea represents a missed opportunity to change a life.

Eye donation therefore belongs in a category of its own. Food donation eases hunger, clothing supports daily living, and financial assistance helps people overcome hardship.

Eye donation gives something that transforms an individual's relationship with the world itself. A donated cornea can help a child return to the classroom, a young adult pursue a profession, or an older citizen reclaim mobility and confidence.

Indian civilization has long celebrated selfless giving. The story of sage Dadhichi, who sacrificed himself for the welfare of humanity, remains deeply woven into the country's cultural memory. Eye donation brings that spirit into the modern age.

Through a simple decision made during life and fulfilled after death, a person continues serving humanity long after their own journey has ended.

Advances in medical science have expanded the impact of that decision.

Earlier generations could help two recipients through the donation of two corneas. Modern surgical techniques allow different layers of a cornea to benefit multiple patients. One donor can now improve several lives.

Public understanding, however, has failed to keep pace with medical progress.

Persistent myths continue to discourage participation. Many people fear facial disfigurement after donation, others believe age prevents eligibility.

Some assume that wearing spectacles, living with diabetes, or managing hypertension automatically rules out donation.

Medical evidence tells a very different story.

Eye retrieval follows a respectful procedure that preserves facial appearance and does not interfere with funeral rites. Corneas can generally be retrieved within four to six hours after death. People in their eighties and nineties often remain eligible donors. Individuals who wear glasses frequently qualify as well. Large sections of the population could contribute if accurate information replaced misconception. Economic considerations strengthen the argument further.

Blindness affects far more than individual health. Educational attainment declines when vision loss limits learning. Employment prospects diminish when people cannot participate fully in the workforce. Families absorb substantial financial costs associated with long-term care and reduced earning capacity. National productivity suffers as well.

Successful corneal transplantation changes that equation.

Restored vision enables people to study, work, travel, and engage in public life. Eye donation therefore contributes not only to personal well-being but also to social and economic progress.

A cornea transplant can transform a recipient into an active participant in the nation's development.

Religious and ethical traditions support that vision of service. Every major faith places compassion, kindness, and concern for others at the center of moral life. Eye donation embodies those values in a deeply practical way, and expresses gratitude for life by extending its benefits to someone else.

Families play a crucial role in this effort. Debates about eye donation should become as common as discussions about

education, health, or financial planning. Young people should learn about donation early. Schools, community groups, healthcare institutions, and civil society organizations can help normalize the idea that pledging one's eyes represents a meaningful civic responsibility.

Several organizations have already demonstrated what sustained commitment can achieve. Lions Club New Delhi Alakanda and Lions International District 321 A-1 have spent decades promoting eye donation through awareness campaigns, donor pledges, eye-care camps, and partnerships with eye banks.

Their work complements the global SightFirst initiative of Lions International, one of the world's largest voluntary programs dedicated to vision preservation and blindness prevention. Millions have benefited through cataract surgeries, vision screening, eye-care services, and public education efforts linked to this mission.

Their example points toward a larger truth. Corneal blindness persists today because awareness has grown more slowly than medical capability. Society possesses the knowledge and tools needed to restore sight on a far greater scale.

A pledge signed today can become sight restored tomorrow. A family's consent during a moment of grief can create a lifetime of opportunity for someone they will never meet.

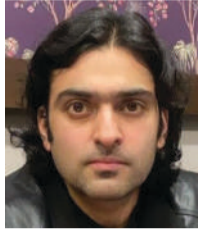
That possibility makes eye donation one of humanity's most extraordinary acts.

Science makes it possible, compassion gives it meaning, and a society that embraces both can bring light to countless lives and move much closer to a future where preventable corneal blindness becomes a rarity rather than a common reality.

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# The Expensive Illusion of Artificial Intelligence

From data centres to soaring token consumption, artificial intelligence is exposing the hidden costs behind the dream of labour-free productivity.



Naveed Qazi

Artificial intelligence was presented as the ultimate efficiency machine, a technology that would remove repetitive work, cut costs and deliver unprecedented gains in productivity.

Executives, investors and consultants repeated the promise with remarkable confidence: software would replace expensive employees, organisations would become leaner and economic output would increase. But a striking reversal is now taking form across the technology industry.

The machines that were supposed to reduce costs are generating expenses so large that many companies are confronting an uncomfortable reality.

In a growing number of cases, artificial intelligence is proving more expensive than the people it was meant to replace.

Signs of this reversal are emerging from the very companies that championed automation most enthusiastically.

Writing in *Forbes*, Tim Bajarin observed that businesses are increasingly shifting spending towards artificial intelligence computing workloads and away from traditional labour costs. Bajarin cited comments from Nvidia executive Bryan Catanzaro, who noted that compute expenditure had exceeded workforce costs in parts of his operation.

Such remarks are significant because they come from industry insiders rather than critics.

The assumption that automation automatically lowers costs begins to weaken when its strongest advocates acknowledge that machines are consuming resources faster than human workers.

At the heart of this shift lies the economics of computation.

Large language models depend on vast data centres, specialised processors, electric-

ity, cooling systems and continuous infrastructure expansion. Every query, prompt and automated task carries a cost. What appears effortless on a computer screen is supported by an industrial system of enormous scale.

The perception that artificial intelligence exists in a weightless digital world obscures the reality that every token processed requires energy, hardware and investment.

Recent reporting has highlighted the emergence of what some technology workers call "tokenmaxxing", a culture in which employees are encouraged to maximise artificial intelligence usage regardless of whether the results justify the expense.

Coverage in *Business Insider* described concerns within major firms that usage statistics were increasingly being treated as measures of productivity. When organisations reward activity rather than outcomes, waste can easily masquerade as efficiency.

Employees may use artificial intelligence for routine or trivial tasks, generating substantial computational costs without creating corresponding value.

The consequences are becoming visible in company accounts.

Reporting in *Forbes* and *The Verge* noted that Uber exhausted its annual artificial intelligence budget within months after expanding the use of coding assistants and related tools. Executives openly questioned whether rising token consumption was translating into better products, stronger services or measurable financial returns.

Productivity is not determined by the number of interactions with a machine but by whether those interactions create genuine economic value.

A deeper irony lies beneath the surface. Many organisations justified workforce reductions by arguing that artificial intelligence would eventually take over tasks previously performed by employees. But reports discussed by Neil C. Hughes in *Cybernews* suggest that some firms are discovering that advanced artificial intelligence systems can cost more than the labour they were intended to replace.

Rather than eliminating expenses, businesses often face rising subscription fees, infrastructure demands and continuing requirements for human oversight.



This contradiction creates a known design in the history of technology.

New innovations are often accompanied by ambitious promises before economic realities emerge. Railways, telecommunications networks and internet platforms all passed through periods of intense speculation. The difference is that those technologies eventually demonstrated clear productivity gains.

Artificial intelligence occupies a more uncertain position. It can generate text, summarise information and automate selected tasks, but evidence of broad economic transformation remains limited.

Economist Joseph Schumpeter described capitalism in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* as a process of creative destruction, in which older systems are replaced by more productive ones. The concept is frequently used to defend technological disruption, but disruption alone is not progress.

If a new system consumes more resources while delivering uncertain benefits, destruction ceases to be creative and becomes merely costly.

There is a growing risk that parts of the artificial intelligence boom are moving in that direction, with vast sums invested in infrastructure before clear returns have been

demonstrated.

Public discussion has also been shaped by the assumption that large-scale job displacement is inevitable.

Debates on BBC Question Time have often treated the replacement of workers by artificial intelligence as a future certainty rather than a proposition to be tested against evidence. But the evidence remains mixed.

Research associated with Massachusetts Institute of Technology has shown that some forms of automation are not always economically viable when compared with human labour.

Matt Stoller, writing in *Think of X*, has argued that artificial intelligence markets frequently reward consumption metrics rather than productive outcomes.

A technology can be impressive in theory while remaining inefficient in practice.

The environmental implications create more concerns. Every expansion of artificial intelligence infrastructure requires more electricity, water and construction. Data centres have become strategic assets precisely because computation has substantial physical costs. Public discussion often treats digital services as though they exist without material constraints, but behind every artificial intelligence application lies a network of

energy systems, supply chains and industrial infrastructure.

The social consequences are equally significant.

Workers increasingly find themselves defending their value against systems that still depend heavily on human oversight.

Errors, fabricated information and inaccuracies continue to require correction by skilled employees.

In *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, Shoshana Zuboff argued that digital technologies often evolve into systems of extraction.

Her warning appears increasingly relevant as artificial intelligence companies draw upon vast quantities of data, attention and capital while concentrating many of the benefits within a small number of firms.

Investors are beginning to recognise these tensions.

For years, financial markets rewarded almost any company associated with artificial intelligence, often regardless of profitability. That period appears to be ending.

Shareholders are increasingly demanding evidence of return on investment rather than demonstrations of technological novelty. Boards want measurable results: savings, new revenue streams or genuine operational improvements.

None of this suggests that artificial intelligence lacks potential. The technology will continue to improve and may eventually deliver many of the efficiencies its supporters promised.

However, the assumption that its success is inevitable has been weakened.

Economic realities have not disappeared simply because algorithms have become more sophisticated. Businesses cannot spend indefinitely without demonstrating value.

The central lesson of the present moment is straightforward: human labour was declared obsolete long before the economics of replacement had been properly tested.

Until artificial intelligence consistently creates more value than it consumes, the paradox will remain: the machines designed to replace people are proving more expensive than the people themselves.

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## Family, After All

A misplaced practical notebook turned an ordinary exam day into a lesson about gratitude, forgiveness and the small acts that keep families together.



Uzma Majid

The morning of my practical and viva examination began well enough. I packed my bag, reached college on time and spent the minutes before the exam revising nervously.

Then a classmate asked to borrow a pen so she could write her roll number on the cover page of her practical notebook.

A wave of panic hit me immediately. My notebook was missing.

The same notebook I had worked on throughout the academic year sat at home on my bookshelf while I stood in college waiting for my examination.

Every page represented months of effort, and every diagram, correction and observation suddenly felt out of reach.

I called my brother in desperation. Between hurried explanations and anxious instructions, I guided him to my room and told him exactly where to find the notebook.

Then came the pleading: "Please bring it to college as quickly as possible."

He did. The notebook reached me before my turn arrived. We could not meet because I was already inside the examination hall, but the moment it landed in my hands, relief swept through me.

The exam proceeded smoothly, and my disaster transformed into a story.

That evening, gratitude felt necessary. My brother had rescued me from a situation entirely of my own making. There was no grand gift involved. A hot samosa with chilli chutney from our favourite roadside



vendor on a rainy day seemed perfect. Shared memories often hold greater value than expensive purchases.

When I reached home, I expected another challenge.

My mother knew about the forgotten notebook. Years of experience had prepared me for a detailed lecture on responsibility and carelessness.

Instead, she greeted me warmly, asked about my examination and served lunch.

During our conversation, I described the day's events. I told her how surprised my professor seemed when the notebook finally arrived. My mother responded with playful sarcasm, delivered with the skill

only mothers possess.

Every sentence contained affection hidden inside gentle teasing.

Then my brother walked into the room. He said almost nothing. His smile said enough. A glance and a raised eyebrow communicated an entire conversation.

According to sibling law, I owed him a favour. According to sibling tradition, he planned to collect that debt whenever convenient.

Later, after prayer, I brought him the promised snacks. A brief smile escaped before he tried to hide it. We talked for a while before he jokingly ordered me out of his room.

Most days, disagreement comes naturally

to us. We argue on staircases, around dinner tables and inside family group chats. Opinions clash with remarkable consistency.

But one unexpected act of help and one small gesture of appreciation changed the atmosphere completely.

Kindness replaced competition, and the day ended with a stronger connection than it began.

That experience reminded me of something larger.

Family life rarely resembles perfection. One day you celebrate a sibling's mistake, another day you become their strongest defender.

Sometimes everyone rallies around you

during a difficult moment, and sometimes they point out that your own choices created the problem.

Every version belongs to the same story. What keeps a family together is neither agreement nor flawless behaviour. Understanding creates that bond, care strengthens it, and respect gives it lasting strength.

A mother disciplines her children and then wraps them in a comforting hug. A husband and wife disagree and later reconnect through a simple apology or a cup of chai. Grandparents share traditions that younger generations may question, while grandchildren show affection through everyday gestures such as bringing water or reminding them to take medicine.

Those moments build family life.

Perfection has little role in that process, but kindness and listening have bigger role. Honest disagreement handled with thoughtfulness does. Daily acts of consideration create stronger relationships than big declarations ever could.

Our faith places great value on treating family members well. The wisdom behind that teaching becomes obvious during life's difficult moments.

When illness arrives, who accompanies you to appointments, checks whether you have eaten and worries about your recovery?

Friends send prayers and messages, but family stands beside you throughout the experience.

That truth stays with me long after the forgotten notebook.

The next time an argument begins at home, I hope to remember a simple teaching of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): the best among people are those who are best to their families.

Some lessons come through books, others arrive through mistakes. Mine came through a forgotten notebook, a caring brother, a loving mother and a plate of samosas.

— The author is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Unani Medicine and Surgery (BUMS). She can be reached at [uzmamajid84438@gmail.com](mailto:uzmamajid84438@gmail.com).

# Nearly 80% Delhi-NCR Patients Turn To Google After Doctor Visits: Study

Press Trust Of India

Patients across Delhi-NCR are increasingly struggling to navigate India's healthcare system, often leaving consultations with unanswered questions and turning to internet for guidance, according to a study.

The study findings from the India Patient Navigation and Confusion Index (IPNCI) 2026, conducted among 1,000 respondents across Delhi, Noida, Gurugram, Faridabad, and Ghaziabad, revealed significant gaps in patient guidance, care coordination, and healthcare navigation.

The findings showed that 73.8 per cent of respondent patients felt rushed during doctor consultations, while 78.5 per cent searched Google or social media after their appointments due to lack of clarity regarding diagnosis, treatment plans, or next steps.

Additionally, 70 per cent of respondents reported not receiving clear guidance on where to go next for tests, diagnostics, or specialist consultations, exposing major gaps in care

continuity, the study, an initiative of Pacific OneHealth Hospital in association with the Indian Medical Academy for Preventive Health (IMAPH), stated.

Saket Bansal, Founder, Pacific OneHealth Hospital, said, "The 'missing middle' in India's healthcare ecosystem is becoming increasingly visible.

Patients are directly reaching tertiary hospitals because coordinated secondary care systems remain weak or fragmented. Strengthening this layer through accessible, integrated, and community-based healthcare models can significantly reduce patient confusion, improve continuity of care, and reduce unnecessary healthcare expenditure."

The study assigned Delhi-NCR an overall IPNCI score of 68.5, placing the region in the 'High Confusion, Low Navigation' category.

Among all dimensions evaluated, Care Navigation emerged as the weakest-performing pillar with a score of 44.1, highlighting significant gaps in helping patients move smoothly across different stages of care.

The findings also revealed a growing imbalance in healthcare utilization patterns. While India operates on a three-tier healthcare framework comprising primary, secondary, and tertiary care, 35.8 per cent of patients reported



directly visiting private tertiary hospitals, bypassing secondary care facilities altogether. This trend contributes to overcrowding at advanced care centres, higher healthcare costs,

and increased pressure on specialist services, the report said.

Further, only 21.4 per cent of respondents reported utilizing government healthcare facilities, despite their affordability, indicating persistent concerns around accessibility, trust, and patient navigation, it said.

The report also found that 78 per cent of patients experienced difficulties coordinating care across doctors, diagnostic centres, pharmacies, and hospitals, while 72 per cent stated they had no access to navigation support services such as patient coordinators, helpdesks, helplines, or digital assistance tools.

Dr Mohsin Wali, Advisory Board Member, IMAPH, said that the findings clearly show that India's healthcare challenge is no longer only about access, but also about navigation.

"While patients are entering the system, they are often left to navigate it on their own. The lack of structured care pathways and patient support mechanisms creates confusion, delays care, increases inefficiencies, and adds avoidable costs," Wali said.

# Scientists Mimic Sleep In Awake Mice, Reverse Memory Loss

Press Trust Of India

Researchers have been able to trigger neural connections in awake mice that normally occur only during sleep, offsetting impacts of sleep deprivation and revealing features key to restorative effects of sleep.

"What we're essentially doing is forcing sleep in a local region of the brain. While that part is solidifying memories and restoring learning capacity, other parts stay aware/vigilant and connected to environment," author Chiara Cirelli, a professor of psychiatry at the US University of Wisconsin-Madison, said.

"Dolphins do something

similar, sleeping with only one brain hemisphere at a time," Cirelli said. The researchers' study, published in the journal Nature Neuroscience, used a combination of light-pulsing implants and genetic modifications to induce rhythmic on-and-off activity in one side of the brains of sleep-deprived mice for 30 minutes at a time, mimicking patterns that occur during NREM (non-rapid eye movement) sleep.

NREM sleep forms about 80 per cent of sleep for human adults and is the restful phase of one's sleep cycle when brain activity, heart rate and breathing slows down.

The NREM stage of sleep cycle is also associated with

memory consolidation in which new, temporary information is converted into stable, long-term memories.

Junctions between neurons that make memories are evaluated. During the NREM phase, the brain protects important connections for long-term storage, prunes those that are less necessary, and makes space for new ones, the researchers explained.

In previous studies, the team showed that when sleep-deprived, both rats and humans can exhibit a local slow-wave brain activity - a hallmark of NREM sleep - while awake.

While the deprivation-induced dips into sleep-like activity

may have been too sporadic and brief to be beneficial, the findings raised questions about the possible effects of a longer, more systematic version of this activity, the researchers said.

During the study, when the mice subsequently slept, slow-wave activity was lower in the specific brain regions the authors had stimulated, indicating a lesser need for sleep. Further experiments suggested that the effect hinged not on the overall reduction in neuronal firing, which some scientists had suggested was critical to recover from wake-induced neuronal fatigue, but rather on the specific alternating on-and-off pattern of activity.

# Vitamin Deficiencies Higher Among Those At Increased Risk Of Dementia: Study

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Prevalence of vitamin D, B2, B6 and B9 deficiencies was significantly higher in those at a high risk of dementia among 556 middle-aged and older adults in Telengana, compared with those at low risk, a study published in The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia journal has found.

The findings highlight the potential role of vitamin status as a modifiable determinant of dementia risk factor burden, researchers said.

Thirty nine per cent of the participants were predicted to have a risk of dementia, a neurodegenerative condition in which memory, thought processes and speech steadily decline.

The researchers, including those from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-National Institute of Nutrition and Sweden's Karolinska Institutet, predicted dementia risk through the Indian-specific Cardiovascular

Risk Factors, Aging, and Incidence of Dementia (CAIDE) score, using information of age, body mass index, physical activity, blood pressure and total cholesterol.

The team also found that the risk of dementia was higher among women and among those living in rural areas, compared to urban areas - protective effects of lower obesity and hypercholesterolaemia, and higher physical activity in rural areas did not offset the dementia risks, they found.

Among the micronutrient deficiencies, vitamin B2 was found to be the most prevalent at 64 per cent of the study group, followed by total vitamin B12 at 47 per cent, vitamin D at 42 per cent, vitamin B6 at 34 per cent and active vitamin B12 at 17 per cent.

Further, "prevalence of vitamin D, B1, B9, and B12 (total and active) deficiencies was higher in HRG (high-risk group) than in LRG (low-risk group)," the authors wrote.

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GHULAM HASSAN NEWS AGNECY	SRIGUFWARA
LOORI NEW AGENCY	SANGAM
IRSHAD NEWS AGENCY	KOKERNAG
FRIENDS NEWS AGNECY	KULGAM
JAVAID NEWS AGENCY	KULGAM
MALIK NEWS AGENCY	AERWANI
IRSHAD NEWS AGENCY	KOKERNAG
RAYEES NEWS AGNECY	AWANTIPORA
PAMPOR NEW AGENCY	PAMPOR
SANGAM NEWS AGENCY	SANGAM
GAZI KHURSHED NEWS AGENCY	PULWAMA
MANZOOR NEWS AGENCY	PUWLAMA
ALTA NEWS AGENCY	PULWAMA
MANZOOR NEWS AGENCY	NORPORA
JAVAID NEWS AGENCY	AWANTIPORA
LONE NEW/ADVT AGENCY	RATNIPORA, PULWAMA
BOOZE NEWS AGNECY	AWANTIPORA
3 WAY TRAL NEWS AGENCY	TRAL
SYED MAQBOOL NEWS AGNECY	TRAL
DAR NEWS AGENCY	PULWAMA
SHAFI NEWS AGENCY	RAJPORA
REYZ NEWS AGENCY	PAMPOR
QUDOOS NEWS AGENCY	SHOPIAN
TURRAY NEWS AGENCY	SHOPIAN
FAROOQ NEWS AGENCY	KAKAPORA PULWAMA
JAVAID NEWS AGENCY	QAZIGUND
NISAR NEWS AGENCY	BANIHAL

FOR ANY QUERY, CALL CIRCULATION DEPTT. : 0194-2502327

### PUBLIC NOTICE

I Reyaz Ahmad Paul S/o Abdul Aziz Paul R/o Checkpora Chadoora want to apply for the issuance of fresh DEE Class Civil Contractor Registration Card from office of the Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Srinagar South Now it is to inform you through this Newspaper that If anybody have any objection in this regard, he/ she may approach Office of the Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Srinagar South within the period of 07 days from the publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

inf

### PUBLIC NOTICE

My name was wrongly mentioned in his school records Aradhya Rajput which is incorrect while my real name as per adhar ARADHYA Devi. It needs correction If anybody is having any objection he/she may contact Kendriya Vidyalaya CRPF Bantalab Jammu within 7 days After 7 days no objection will be accepted. Aradhya Devi D/O Kishor Chand R/o Mirwani Tehsil DH Pora Dist. Kulgam

x

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, Lovely, D/o Late Gh Mohammad R/o Kathmaidan, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from Lovely (as recorded in my school records and Discharge Certificate issued by Immamia High School, Zadihal, Srinagar). Henceforth, I shall be known and identified by the name Lovely for all purposes, and all records, documents, and future transactions shall bear this name. Any person having any objection to the aforesaid change of name may contact the undersigned within seven days from the publication of this notice.

Lovely D/o: Late Gh Mohammad R/o: Kathmaidan, Srinagar,

### NOTICE

I Reyaz Ahmad Paul S/o Abdul Aziz Paul R/o Checkpora Chadoora want to apply for the issuance of fresh DEE Class Civil Contractor Registration Card from office of the Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Srinagar South Now it is to inform you through this Newspaper that If anybody have any objection in this regard, he/ she may approach Office of the Superintending Engineer PWD (R&B) Circle Srinagar South within the period of 07 days from the publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

mko

### OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER POSHAN PROJECT BIJBEHARA

Merit / Tentative Selection list of candidates who have applied for the post of Sangini (Anganwadi Worker) of Anganwadi centres Advertisd vide Notice No:10 of 2024 Dated:16.12.2024 followed by Re-Advertisement Notice NO: 01 of 2025 Dated: 28.04.2025 shown below for wide publicity for general public for objection, if any then objection should be submitted to the office of Child Development Project Officer Poshan Project Bijbehara within 10 days from the date of Publishing of the below mentioned tentative Merit list

No: CDPO/Poshan/Bij/2026-27/164-173 Dated: 09.06.2026

S.No	Name of Candidate	Parentage/Spouse Name	Residence	Date of Birth	Name of AWC	Ward	Qualification	Max Marks as per 10th class	Marks Obtained	%age	Addl.02 points as per HR Policy	Total Merit	Remarks
1.	Samira Jan	D/o Aabid Hussain Shah	Kathsoo	15.03.2003	Kathsoo "B"	06	12 <sup>th</sup>	500	384	76.80%	0	76.8	Tentatively Selected
2	Shagufta Shah	D/o Arshid Ahmad Shah	Kathsoo	02.07.2003	Kathsoo "B"	06	12 <sup>th</sup>	500	378	75.60%	0	75.60	
3	Sameena Rashid	D/o Ab Rashid Mir W/o Firdousa Ahmad Bhat	Kathsoo	04.04.1999	Kathsoo "B"	06	12 <sup>th</sup>	500	309	61.80%	0	61.8	
4	Laaly Jan	D/o Mohammad Ramzan Hajam	Kathsoo	03.03.2001	Kathsoo "B"	06	12 <sup>th</sup>	500	255	51.00%	0	51	
5	Roqia Akhter	D/o Mohd Yousuf Thoker W/o Tawseef Ahmad Bhat	Kathsoo	02.10.1989	Kathsoo "B"	06	12 <sup>th</sup>	750	306	40.80%	0	40.80	

DIPK-1944/26 dated: 09-06-2026

Sd/-  
Child Development Project Officer  
Poshan Project Bijbehara  
Member Secretary

## How to Start a Laundry Business in India

A Complete 2026 Guide for Entrepreneurs



**NEW DELHI** : India's laundry and dry cleaning industry is rapidly emerging as one of the most promising service-based business sectors in the country.

With rising urbanization, busy lifestyles, dual-income households, and growing demand for convenience, professional laundry services are witnessing strong growth across metro cities as well as Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets.

Today, consumers are increasingly looking for reliable garment care solutions that offer hygiene, fabric safety, convenience, and timely delivery. This shift in consumer behavior is creating major opportunities for entrepreneurs planning to enter the laundry business in India.

However, industry experts believe many people still underestimate the complexity of the sector.

According to professionals associated with Global Institute of Laundry Management (GILM), one of the biggest mistakes entrepreneurs make is assuming laundry is a "simple business." In reality, modern

laundry operations involve fabric science, stain treatment systems, machine handling, chemical balancing, workflow optimization, customer experience management, and quality control processes.

"Laundry today is no longer a small traditional business. It is becoming a professionally managed service industry driven by systems, operational efficiency, and customer trust," says Himanshu Sehrawat, industry expert associated with GILM.

As a result, people searching for "how to start laundry business in India" are no longer looking only for washing machines and shop rental costs. They are actively searching for structured business guidance, operational systems, practical exposure, and professional training.

Industry professionals say India's organized laundry market still has massive untapped potential, particularly in residential societies, corporate hubs, hotels, hospitals, salons, student housing zones, and premium urban neighborhoods.

Experts believe today's consumers are willing to pay more for reliability, convenience, professional finishing, and fabric safety.

For more information, visit: <https://globalinstituteoflaundrymanagement.com/>

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

## Yamaha Opens Two New Blue Square Showrooms in Srinagar



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR**— India Yamaha Motor (IYM) on Monday inaugurated two new Blue Square dealerships in Srinagar, expanding its retail network in Jammu and Kashmir.

The new dealerships — The Destination at ASHCO Arcade, Batamalo, and Speed Wings at Gulshan Nagar, Nowgam — have been set up as part of the company's strategy to strengthen its presence in the region and enhance customer access to its products and services.

With the addition of the two outlets, Yamaha now operates eight Blue Square showrooms and 19 customer touchpoints across Jammu and Kashmir, the company said in a statement.

The company said the new dealerships are aimed at catering to the growing demand for Yamaha motorcycles and scooters in Srinagar and nearby

areas.

Blue Square dealerships are designed to offer customers access to Yamaha's range of motorcycles and scooters, along with genuine accessories, apparel and spare parts.

The company said the outlets would also serve as meeting points for members of its Blue Streaks rider community and host customer engagement activities.

Yamaha's product portfolio in India includes premium motorcycles such as the XSR155, YZF-R15 V4, YZF-R15S and MT-15 V2, along with models from its FZ series. The company also markets scooters including the Aerox 155, Fascino and RayZR range.

According to the company, the expansion is part of its efforts to strengthen its retail footprint and customer engagement initiatives across the country.

## J&K Bank Inks Pact To Offer Banking Services To Govt's Contractual Employees



Press Trust of India

**SRINAGAR**— The government of Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday signed an agreement with J&K Bank to extend banking, insurance and credit-related benefits to daily-rated workers, contractual employees and other casual workers.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), aimed at bringing contractual employees, casual workers and daily-rated workers under a structured framework of banking convenience and financial protection, strengthens the bank's position as the preferred banking partner of the government of Jammu & Kashmir, an official spokesman said.

Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, who was present at the signing of the MoU, expressed confidence that the arrangement would significantly enhance the financial well-being

**We are pleased to extend, for the first time, a comprehensive bouquet of banking and insurance benefits to contractual employees, casual workers, and daily rated workers of the government,"**

and social security of thousands of contractual employees and casual workers.

Extending insurance coverage to daily wagers will not only provide financial protection but also enhance the sense of security and well-being among employees, moti-

ating them to discharge their duties with greater dedication, efficiency, and transparency, the chief secretary said.

"We are pleased to extend, for the first time, a comprehensive bouquet of banking and insurance benefits to contractual employees, casual workers, and daily rated workers of the government," said Amitava Chatterjee, MD and CEO of J&K Bank.

The bank's General Manager, Rakesh Magotra, explained the benefits provided under the agreement.

Eligible beneficiaries will be provided zero-balance accounts along with a range of value-added banking services, including free debit cards, digital banking facilities, concessional remittance services, and access to specially designed credit products.

The package also includes a group personal accidental insurance of Rs 5 lakh as well as disability-related covers.

## India Key Partner in Quantum Computing, Supply Chains: US

Press Trust Of India

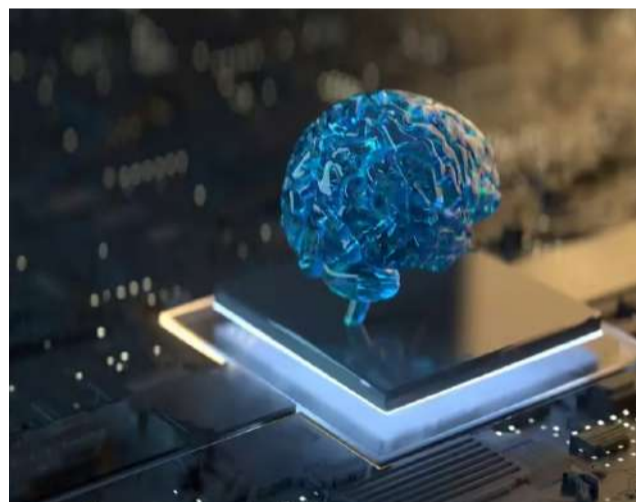
**WASHINGTON**— India is a trusted partner of the US in areas such as quantum computing and supply chains, US Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Sarah Rogers said on Tuesday.

Rogers is on a visit to India, Nepal, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan for advancing commercial diplomacy, cultural preservation, digital freedom, and innovation.

"India is one of our trusted partners on things like quantum computing and supply chains, and I think that is an example of a concrete implementation of the Trump administration's priorities in South and Central Asia," Rogers said in an online media interaction from Turkmenistan's capital, Ashgabat.

Rogers was in New Delhi last month where she spoke at the Indian Institute of Technology IIT Delhi on the Transforming the Relationship Utilising Strategic Technology (TRUST) initiative.

"I think this (TRUST) is one of many concrete deliverables that advance some of our really important strategic inter-



ests in the region," she said. Rogers said she also visited some of the exchange participants in the Quad framework to talk about fibre optic cables and other kinds of critical technological initiatives in the region.

Rogers' visit to India came close on the heels of the Quad foreign minister's meeting that was attended by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on May 24.

Rogers said there were several lines of convergence between India and the US on

technology. "India is a giant tech market, and we've seen a lot of productive symbiosis between American and Indian companies and entrepreneurs," she said.

"One line of collaboration that I actually mentioned in my opening remarks is the TRUST initiative. I think we're seeing productive collaboration through the plot as well, and I am confident that there will be future productive lines of collaboration on tech," Rogers said.

## Gold Regains Rs 1.6 Lakh/10g Level As Weak US Dollar Lifts Sentiment

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI**— Gold prices rebounded by Rs 1,500 to reclaim the Rs 1.60 lakh per 10-gram mark in the national capital on Tuesday due to a weak US dollar and improving sentiment in the bullion market.

According to local marketmen, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity climbed Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,60,300 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Monday's closing level of Rs 1,58,800 per 10 grams.

The recovery came even as global gold prices traded lower, with analysts attributing the rise in domestic prices weak to US dollar and renewed investor interest.

"Gold prices rebounded on Tuesday, supported by a decline in crude oil prices and a pullback in the US dollar and Treasury bond yields," Saamil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities, HDFC Securities, said.

Silver prices, however, remained flat at Rs 2,55,700 per kilogram.

Market sentiment improved after Iran and Israel agreed to halt attacks against each other, while comments from US President Donald Trump indicating progress toward a formal ceasefire boosted hopes for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict, he added.

"The easing of geopolitical tensions helped alleviate concerns over energy-driven inflation, providing support to precious metals after recent



weakness.

"However, the recovery remained limited as investors continued to weigh the outlook for US monetary policy," Gandhi said.

In the international markets, spot gold slipped marginally to USD 4,326.78 per ounce, however silver edged up at USD 68.28 per ounce.

Spot gold is trading lower around USD 4,330 per ounce level as traders look for more clues to the situation in the Middle East, Praveen Singh, Head of commodities at Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

Meanwhile, crude oil prices traded lower as the US President Donald Trump claimed that a good deal involving Washington and Tehran is imminent.

"Investors are closely watching US Consumer Price Index and Producer Price Index releases, due on Wednesday, for clear signals on the Federal Reserve's monetary policy trajectory," Renisha Chainani, Head of Research at Augmont, said.

The European Central Bank is also widely expected to deliver a rate increase this week, she added.

## Know Your Gold Loan Eligibility Before You Pledge

**B**ajaj Finance explains how a gold loan calculator simplifies the borrowing process and what documents required for gold loan applicants are minimal by design

Mumbai— India's households collectively hold an estimated 25,000 tonnes of gold, one of the largest private gold reserves in the world. Yet when a financial need arises, most owners have no clear sense of what that gold can unlock. They walk into a branch not knowing whether their jewellery qualifies for Rs. 50,000 or Rs. 5 lakh.

Bajaj Finance's gold loan calculator is designed to change that. It gives borrowers a verified, methodology-backed loan estimate before they pledge a single gram — removing the guesswork from one of India's most widely used secured credit products. How the loan amount is actually calculated

Understanding what drives the eligible amount helps borrowers make better pledging decisions.

The calculation starts with three inputs: the weight of the gold in grams, its purity in karats, and the applicable gold rate. Where most borrowers go wrong is assuming the rate used is the live market price they see on a financial app. It is not. Bajaj Finance values pledged gold at the lower of the previous day's closing price or the 30-day average closing price published



by IBJA or a SEBI-regulated commodity exchange. This is a deliberate, RBI-aligned methodology, it protects both the borrower and the lender from short-term price volatility and ensures the loan is structured on a stable valuation basis.

Once the gold value is established, the RBI-prescribed Loan-to-Value (LTV) ratio of up to 85% is applied to arrive at the final eligible loan amount. For example, if a borrower pledges 22-karat gold valued at Rs. 2 lakh, they may be eligible for a loan of up to Rs. 1.70 lakh.

Why using the calculator before applying matters

Bajaj Finance's gold loan calculator is available on their website and app, accessible from anywhere in India — Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, or a Tier-3 town.

For more information, visit [www.bajajfinserv.in](http://www.bajajfinserv.in).

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

## Luxury On A Budget: Cranberries Are The Secret To Perfect Gifts

KO News NETWORK

**NEW DELHI**: As the festive season is near, gifting trends are evolving toward options that are not only thoughtful but also visually striking and health-conscious. Cranberries, with their vibrant red hue and tangy-sweet flavor, are emerging as an affordable yet exotic ingredient that can instantly upgrade any gift hamper. From dried fruit mixes and gourmet snacks to festive beverages and chocolate treats, cranberries add both elegance and a touch of indulgence to gifting options. What sets cranberries apart is that they are more than just visually appealing. Packed with antioxidants, vitamins, and compounds that support immunity and digestion, they bring a healthful twist to festive gifting. This combination of flavor, visual charm, and wellness makes cranberry-based gifts feel luxurious without straining the budget, appealing to both traditional and modern gift-givers.

For those looking for gift inspiration, cranberry-based hampers can include:

- US dried cranberries mixed with nuts and seeds
- Cranberry chocolate bark or truffles
- Cranberry jams or sauces
- Festive cranberry mocktails or juice blends
- Cranberry-infused cookies or baked treats

Whether for family, friends, or corporate clients, cranberry-infused gifts are proving that luxury doesn't have to come with a hefty price tag. With a little creativity, even budget-friendly gifts can feel special, thoughtful, and festive. US Cranberries are easily available in India with dry fruit stores and e-commerce platforms.

## India's Exports Rising Steadily Due To Policy Push, Reforms

Press Trust Of India

**JAIPUR**— India's exports have witnessed consistent growth in recent years, driven by supportive government policies, improved digital infrastructure, better logistics and trade reforms, a senior commerce ministry official said on Tuesday.

Speaking at a regional media interaction organised by the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPCC) and the Department of Commerce here, Senior Economic Adviser Agrim Kaushal highlighted the government's commitment to making India a global leader in the textiles and apparel sector.

He referred to the Prime Minister's "5F vision" — "Farm to Fibre, Fibre to Factory, Factory to Fashion, and Fashion to Foreign" — as a key framework guiding the sector's growth.

During the session themed "Strengthening India's Position in Global Apparel Trade: Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward," Kaushal outlined major initiatives such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, PM MITRA parks, Mega Textile Parks, the National Technical Textiles Mission and various export promotion measures.

"These efforts have strengthened India's textile value chain and enhanced the country's competitiveness in global markets," he said.

Kaushal also underlined opportunities arising from India's expanding network of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and the recently launched Export Promotion Mission.

Highlighting Rajasthan's role, he said Jaipur has emerged as the largest apparel export hub in the state, contributing around 86 per cent to Rajasthan's total ready-made garment exports.

## Market Snaps Two-Day Losing Streak; Sensex Gains 400 Pts

Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI**— Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty found firmer ground on Tuesday after sliding for the past two sessions, propelled by intense buying in banking and financial stocks amid a recovery in global markets and easing crude prices.

Signs of easing tensions in West Asia added to markets' optimism, but unrelenting foreign fund outflows capped the gains, traders said.

In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 394.50 points, or 0.54 per cent, to settle at 73,918.76. During the day, it jumped 511.15 points, or 0.69 per cent, to 74,035.41.

A total of 2,782 stocks advanced, while 1,423 declined and 193 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty ended 119.10 points, or 0.52 per cent, higher at 23,242.10. Intra-day, the benchmark index climbed 156.4 points, or 0.67 per cent, to 23,279.40.

"Indian equity markets ended higher as easing tensions between Israel and Iran helped improve investor sentiment and drive a recovery in risk assets."

"Global markets also traded firmly in positive territory, supported by a combination of easing geopolitical risks, softer oil prices and renewed optimism surrounding the technology and AI sectors," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Among the Sensex firms, InterGlobe Aviation, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance and Asian Paints were the major winners.

On the other hand, Titan, NTPC, Power Grid and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards.

The BSE MidCap Select index jumped 1.50 per cent, and the SmallCap Select index went up by 1.33 per cent.

## ATF Prices Rise About 10% As Oil Companies Roll Out Fixed Pricing

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI**— Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices were raised by around 10 per cent on Tuesday as state-owned fuel retailers rolled out a price stabilisation regime, offering domestic airlines a fixed fuel rate for up to three years in a move aimed at shielding carriers and passengers from sharp swings in global oil prices.

Jet fuel for domestic airlines will now cost Rs 115 per litre, up from Rs 104.927, industry sources said. The new rate will be locked in for up to three years for airlines that opt to participate in the government-backed price stabilisation scheme. Airlines that do not opt for the scheme will pay market-linked prices, currently around Rs 142 per litre, similar to international carriers. Those opting into the price stabilisation scheme will continue to receive ATF at Rs 115 per litre, insulated from global benchmark fluctuations. While non-participating carriers will benefit from price declines, they will also face higher costs when international rates rise.

Sources said the scheme is completely voluntary, and airlines will have to take a call if they want to participate in it.

Under the voluntary scheme, participating airlines will pay a fixed free-on-board (FOB) benchmark price of Rs 86.32 per litre, plus airport charges, oil company margins and applicable taxes, resulting in an effective selling price of Rs 115 per litre in Delhi, Rs 114.5 in Mumbai and Rs 139 in Chennai.

The new rate compares with a below-market level of about Rs 105 per litre in Delhi, which had remained unchanged for more than two months after the government allowed only a partial pass-through of higher global fuel costs triggered by the outbreak of the West Asia conflict in late February. The freeze had led to losses for oil marketing companies on aviation turbine fuel (ATF), similar to pressures seen in petrol, diesel and LPG segments.

# PMAY Lists Trigger Resentment In South Kashmir

## Residents allege inclusion of ineligible persons, demand fresh verification and probe into selection process

### Agencies

Srinagar: Allegations of large-scale irregularities in the beneficiary selection process under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) 2.0 have triggered widespread resentment in several parts of South Kashmir, with residents accusing authorities of including non-deserving individuals in the priority category while excluding many genuinely eligible families.

People from Qazigund, Dooru, Kokernag, Gadole and several other areas have raised serious concerns over the recently published beneficiary lists, alleging that the exercise lacks transparency and has deprived many economically weaker households of benefits meant for them.

The aggrieved residents have demanded a comprehensive review of the lists, fresh ground verification and an independent investigation into the alleged discrepancies. Some residents have even sought a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), claiming that only an impartial inquiry can restore public confidence in the scheme.

Many residents said they had been waiting for years with the hope of receiving assistance under the housing scheme but were left shocked after finding their names either missing from the list or placed in the non-priority category.

"I have been waiting for nearly five years hoping that my case would finally be considered.



When the list was released, I was surprised to see my name placed in the non-priority category," said Gul Mohammad, a resident of Panzath Qazigund.

"What hurts even more is that several people who already have proper concrete houses have been included in the priority list. We fail to understand the criteria adopted for this selection," he added.

Similar allegations have emerged from Gadole and adjoining areas, where several residents claimed they continue to live in tin sheds and temporary structures but were either omitted altogether or categorized as non-priority beneficiaries.

"We have no permanent shelter and have been living in difficult conditions for years. Despite this, our names are nowhere to be found in the priority list. We want authorities to physically verify every household before finalizing the beneficiaries," said a local resident from Gadole.

Residents questioned the credibility of the verification

process and alleged that local-level data available with field functionaries should have prevented such errors.

They said that mistakes of officials shouldn't prevent deserving persons from getting the benefits of the govt schemes.

"Officials are saying that names may have been deleted due to a system issue. But if that is the case, what role are the ground staff such as Gram Rozgar Sevaks (GRSs), Village Level Workers (VLWs) and other officials supposed to play? They have complete knowledge of local households and maintain records. Such discrepancies should have been detected well in time," another resident said.

The residents demanded that authorities immediately undertake a fresh verification exercise, rectify mistakes and ensure that deserving families are not deprived of housing assistance due to administrative lapses.

Responding to the concerns,

Director Rural Development Department (RDD) Kashmir, Reyaz Ahmad Wani, said the matter would be examined and corrective action taken wherever required.

"We will look into the complaints. If any wrong entry has been made, there is a provision to delete it after verification," Wani said.

He explained that beneficiaries approved under the scheme are required to submit geo-tagged photographs at various stages of house construction, making it difficult for ineligible persons to receive benefits without scrutiny.

"Even after sanction, every beneficiary has to provide geo-tagged photographs at different levels. If somebody already has a house and has been wrongly included, the matter can be verified and appropriate action taken. Likewise, if any deserving family has been left out, we will make every effort to include them as per the guidelines," he said.

Wani further stated that beneficiary lists are generally prepared on the basis of census data and other parameters, including socio-economic indicators and ration card-related information.

Meanwhile, residents have urged the administration to ensure complete transparency in the selection process and conduct a detailed field-level verification so that assistance reaches those who genuinely need support for housing. (KNO)

### NEET RE-EXAM

## Ministry, NTA, NMC Officials To Face Par Panel On Health

### Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Top officials of the Health and Education ministries, National Testing Agency and National Medical Commission will brief a parliamentary panel on Wednesday over the conduct of the NEET-UG re-examination on June 21.

The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare has summoned the secretaries of Higher Education and Health, besides top officials of the NTA and NMC, to brief the panel on the NEET re-exam.

This is the third parliamentary panel before whom the top officials of the ministries and NTA (National Testing Agency) and NMC (National Medical Commission) are appearing.

Top officials of the Union Health and Education ministries, as well as of NTA and NMC, have already appeared before the Parliamentary Committees on Education and Government Assurances, and told them that their complete focus for now was to hold the June 21 NEET-UG re-exam in penpaper format. CBI Director Praveen Sood has also appeared before a parliamentary panel about the progress made in the probe into the NEET-UG paper leak case and the steps being taken to arrest all those behind the paper leakage.

The summoning of officials on June 10 comes in the wake of the cancellation of the NEET-UG exam held on May



3 following reports of a paper leak. Some students have also committed suicide after the exam cancellation, and there are growing concerns among the student community over the reexamination of the NEET exam.

The Parliamentary Committee on Health, which looks into the functioning of the Union Health ministry, will now question the officials on the examination and its conduct.

The panel will hear the views of the Secretary, Department of Health and Family Welfare (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare) and the Secretary, Department of Higher Education (Ministry of Education), along with senior officers of NMC and NTA on 'Conduct of NEET examinations under NMC Act, 2019'.

Their deposition before the panel comes as part of a detailed examination of the subject 'Organizational Structure, Mandate and Functional Proficiency of Regulatory Institutions pertaining to

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare'. The Parliamentary Committee on Health will meet on June 10 afternoon in the Parliament House Annex.

The Parliamentary Committee for Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, headed by Congress member Digvijaya Singh, has already asked the NTA to define what constitutes a "paper leak" in its definition and whether any paper leaks have occurred in exams it conducted since 2018, sources said.

The panel's questionnaire follows NTA officials' appearance before it last week, where they contended that there was no paper leak from their system, claiming that some questions from a guess paper were in circulation, sources said.

The Digvijaya Singh-led panel is looking into the NEET paper leak issue and the CBSE on-screen marking system (OSM) row, having summoned top government officials, including those from the NTA and CBSE.

### CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

## Final Blast Connects

The tunnel will provide all-weather connectivity between Srinagar and Ladakh and transform the lives of the people," he said.

The breakthrough blasting was carried out at an equidistant point of 6.5 kilometres from both ends, linking the East Portal and West Portal of the tunnel. In tunnelling terminology, a breakthrough refers to the moment when excavation teams working from opposite sides meet.

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah were present during the breakthrough ceremony.

Officials of the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), which is overseeing the project, said the milestone had been achieved six months ahead of schedule.

Authority Engineer for the project, Yousef Es'haghpour Rahimabadi, said approximately 85 per cent of the overall work has already been completed.

"After this breakthrough, civil works inside the tunnel will continue for another seven to eight months. Once that phase is completed, electrical and mechanical installations will begin," he said.

Officials indicated that the tunnel is expected to be opened to the public by February 2028.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the project fulfilled a long-standing aspiration of the people of Ladakh, who have historically remained cut off from the rest of the country during winter months.

"People of Ladakh have dreamt of this connectivity for a very long time. Lack of all-weather access affected education, tourism, healthcare and day-to-day life. This tunnel will improve living conditions and create new opportunities for the people of the region," Abdullah said.

He also urged the Union government to further improve air connectivity to Ladakh in the future.

The tunnel, measuring 13.153 kilometres in length, is designed as a horseshoe-shaped, single-tube, bi-directional two-lane road tunnel. It is 9.5 metres wide and 7.57 metres high and is being built at an elevation of around 11,578 feet above sea level.

Together with an 18-kilometre approach road, bridges and associated infrastructure, the entire project spans 31 kilometres from Sonamarg in central Kashmir to Minimarg in the Drass sector of Ladakh.

Once operational, the tunnel is expected to dramatically improve access to Drass, Kargil and Leh, while strengthening civilian transportation, logistics networks and military mobility in the strategically sensitive region.

The project will also address the long-standing transportation challenges posed by the Zojila Pass, which remains closed for several months every year due to heavy snowfall, avalanches and extreme weather conditions. The closure often isolates Ladakh from the Kashmir Valley during winter.

Officials said travel time through the Zojila sector is expected to reduce from more than an hour to approximately 15 minutes after the tunnel becomes operational.

The tunnel is also expected to boost tourism, trade, economic activity and regional development by ensuring uninterrupted movement of

people and goods throughout the year.

The project is being executed by Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Limited (MEIL), which adopted the New Austrian Tunneling Method (NATM) to navigate the difficult Himalayan geology.

MEIL began construction work in October 2020 after securing the contract from NHIDCL.

According to company officials, the project has faced significant natural challenges over the years. The construction site has witnessed five avalanche incidents during the past five years, including a major avalanche in January 2023 when 172 workers stranded in the area were rescued by the Indian Army.

Despite these difficulties, the company said the project has achieved 10 million safe man-hours during construction.

Gadkari highlighted the government's efforts to reduce project costs through competitive bidding.

"Several rounds of bidding were conducted. During the fifth round, the estimated project cost was around Rs 12,000 crore. However, we are constructing it at around Rs 7,000 crore, resulting in savings of nearly Rs 5,000 crore," he said.

MEIL officials said the company is targeting completion of the project by 2028 and will continue to operate and maintain the tunnel for five years after its commissioning.

Among the world's highest tunnel projects and the longest tunnel project in Asia, the Zojila Tunnel is expected to emerge as a transformative infrastructure link, ending the seasonal isolation of Ladakh and ensuring reliable all-weather connectivity between the region and the Kashmir Valley for the first time.

### India Urges Accountability

concern over the ongoing unrest and violence in PoK during clashes involving protesters and authorities.

The rights body said it was deeply alarmed by the situation and also raised objections to the regional administration's decision to ban the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) under anti-terrorism laws.

The JAAC has been campaigning for the abolition of 12 refugee seats in the so-called Legislative Assembly of PoK. The seats are reserved for people who migrated to Pakistan from Jammu and Kashmir after 1947.

The organisation alleges that mainstream political parties in Pakistan have frequently used these seats to influence government formation in Muzaffarabad.

India has consistently maintained that the entire region of Jammu and Kashmir, including territories under Pakistan's control, is an integral part of India. New Delhi has also protested recent electoral exercises in PoK, asserting that the territory remains under Pakistan's "illegal and forcible occupation".

The latest exchange comes amid renewed scrutiny of the political and human rights situation in the region following reports of deaths and injuries during the recent protests.

### Rain, Hail Lash

weather experts said relief is on the horizon as a fresh Western Disturbance is expected to affect the Western Himalayan region from June 11.

Director Meteorological Centre Srinagar, Mukhtar Ahmad, said weather conditions are likely to remain generally hot and dry across

Jammu and Kashmir till June 10, though brief afternoon showers at isolated places cannot be ruled out.

He said that from June 11 to June 14, the Union Territory is expected to witness partly to generally cloudy weather with light rain, brief intense showers, thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds at scattered to many places.

"Thunderstorms, lightning, hailstorms and gusty winds with speeds of 40 to 50 kmph, gusting up to 60 kmph, accompanied by brief intense showers, are expected at isolated to scattered locations during this period," Ahmad said.

The IMD has also forecast isolated to scattered rainfall across Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand during the next few days. Rainfall activity is likely to spread to Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan from June 10 onwards.

Weather officials warned that intense rainfall at some places could trigger flash floods, mudslides and localised flooding in vulnerable areas between June 11 and June 14.

Authorities have advised residents, farmers and travellers to remain alert and follow weather advisories, particularly in areas prone to landslides, flash floods and thunderstorm-related incidents.

While the expected rainfall is likely to provide relief from the ongoing heatwave, officials cautioned that severe weather conditions may pose risks in some areas.

### Payment Delays

uninterrupted functioning of these services depends on the timely procurement of medicines, medical consumables, implants, diagnostic equipment and retention of trained healthcare professionals.

"Delayed reimbursements directly affect our ability to meet these obligations and maintain quality healthcare services," the spokesperson said.

JKPHDA also expressed concern over the increasing cost of healthcare delivery, attributing it partly to disruptions in global supply chains arising from ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

According to the Association, prices of several critical medical products, including cancer drugs such as Cisplatin and Carboplatin, as well as cardiac stents and orthopaedic implants, have increased significantly in recent months.

The Association further alleged an imbalance in the utilisation of funds under the Ayushman Bharat-SEHAT Scheme, claiming that while private hospitals continue to struggle with unpaid claims, more than Rs 180 crore of scheme funds are reportedly lying unutilised with public hospitals.

"Paying public hospitals at the cost of private hospitals is like transferring money from one government pocket to another without serving the intended objective," it said.

JKPHDA also referred to provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding governing empanelment under the scheme, stating that hospitals are entitled to receive one per cent interest per week on delayed payments under Section 6 of the agreement.

The Association alleged that despite this provision, hospitals have not received compensation for delayed reimbursements.

Announcing the decision to begin de-empanelment from July 1, the Association said

the step had been taken collectively by private hospitals and dialysis centres across the Union Territory after repeated representations failed to yield results.

It urged the authorities to take immediate corrective measures to prevent disruption in healthcare services.

Among its key demands, JKPHDA sought immediate clearance of all pending claims along with applicable interest, a transparent and time-bound mechanism for review of rejected claims, segregation of payment systems for public and private hospitals, restoration of patient choice under the scheme and structured engagement with private healthcare providers.

The Association cautioned that continued delays in reimbursements could seriously undermine the financial sustainability of many hospitals and dialysis centres, ultimately affecting patient care.

Calling for urgent intervention, JKPHDA said timely payments and adherence to agreed contractual obligations were essential to ensure the continued participation of private healthcare providers in the Ayushman Bharat-SEHAT Scheme and prevent disruption of services for beneficiaries across Jammu and Kashmir. (inputs from KNO)

### Modi's 12 Yrs Integrated

country during the last 12 years under the leadership of Modi and said the period has been marked by inclusive development, transparent governance, technological advancement and empowerment of every section of society.

The minister outlined several landmark initiatives and reforms undertaken by the government, including expansion of infrastructure, strengthening of social welfare schemes, digital governance, financial inclusion, healthcare, education and rural development.

"The benefits of these initiatives have reached the remotest regions of the country, ensuring that development is not confined to urban centres alone," he said.

Referring to J-K. Singh said the region has witnessed holistic development over the past decade, with significant improvements in connectivity including Katra Expressway Corridor, multiple tunnel projects, public infrastructure, healthcare facilities, educational institutions and employment opportunities.

He noted that various centrally sponsored schemes have accelerated socio-economic growth and improved the quality of life of the people.

The minister reiterated the government's commitment to the vision of Viksit Bharat and called upon citizens, particularly the youth, to actively participate in the nation's development journey.

He said the achievements of the last 12 years have laid a strong foundation for building a developed, self-reliant and prosperous India by 2047.

Earlier, upon his arrival, Singh attended a commemorative programme held at Mela village of Hiranagar in memory of late Amarjeet Sharma who was found dead in his native village in June 2024.

The minister paid tributes to the deceased and interacted with members of his family as well as local residents.

Recalling the sacrifice of Sharma, the minister said Mela village has a rich legacy of nationalism and public service and the sacrifice

made by him would continue to inspire future generations.

The minister highlighted that following the killing of Amarjeet Sharma, security forces intensified anti-terror operations in the region.

He appreciated the unwavering support extended by local residents to the Army and paramilitary forces in preventing cross-border infiltration attempts, particularly in view of the area's proximity to the international border.

Emphasising the spirit of national service, the minister said every citizen should dedicate his or her life to the service of the nation.

"The real tribute to those who have sacrificed for the country is to serve the nation in our respective capacities with sincerity and commitment," he said.

### Rs 2.47 Cr Chenab

room for delays or lapses in execution. With the monsoon approaching, flood protection works must be completed on priority," he said.

The minister also assured that all vulnerable stretches along major rivers across Jammu and Kashmir would be addressed on a priority basis.

Calling for a proactive approach, Rana instructed officials to focus on the maintenance and strengthening of existing flood protection structures, particularly in areas prone to erosion and inundation.

Earlier, the minister visited Bhagatpur village in Jammu district and inspected the damaged embankment along the Tawi River. He sought a detailed report from officials on the restoration plan and directed them to take necessary measures to prevent further damage.

Officials said the flood protection project at Fattu Kotli is expected to significantly reduce the risk of riverbank erosion and enhance the safety of nearby habitations and infrastructure during periods of high water flow.

### Ambulance Refusal

Ramban for treatment. The incident prompted social activist Saddam Bali to lodge a complaint with the Health Department, seeking action against the ambulance staff and urging authorities to ensure that similar incidents do not recur.

Acting on the complaint, Ramban Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Kamal G Zadoo directed the Block Medical Officer (BMO), Batote, to conduct a detailed inquiry into the allegations.

In an official communication, the BMO has been asked to carry out a comprehensive investigation and submit a report to the CMO's office within two days.

Speaking to reporters, Dr Zadoo said the 108 ambulance service operates under a contractual arrangement but maintained that the Health Department makes every effort to ensure ambulance services reach remote habitations connected by road.

"We make every effort to ensure that ambulances reach remote villages with road connectivity," he said.

The CMO said appropriate action would be taken in accordance with the rules after the inquiry report is received.

Officials said the investigation will ascertain the circumstances under which the ambulance failed to reach the village and determine whether any negligence occurred on the part of the staff.

It's Bigger. Is It Better?

A Look At Differences Between 1994 & 2026 World Cups

AP

**NEW YORK:** A look at differences between the 1994 World Cup, the first in the United States, and the 2026 tournament, which will be played in the U.S., Mexico and Canada from June 11 through the final on July 19:

**Ticket prices**

1994: Ticket prices ranged from \$25 to \$75 for first-round games (\$40-\$120 for the opener), and from \$180 to \$475 for the final at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California.

2026: When FIFA put individual game tickets on sale in December, prices ranged from \$140 to \$2,735 for first-round games and from \$4,185 to \$8,680 for the final. This was the first World Cup with so-called dynamic pricing, meaning the price reflects real or perceived demand. FIFA raised the top price for the final to \$10,990 in April.

**Tournament size**

1994: The tournament was the last World Cup with 24 teams. The field expanded to 32 in 1998.

2026: The tournament expanded again to 48 this year when a new round of 32 was established. The finalists will play eight games, up from

seven.

**Field size**

1994: At the time, FIFA specified fields had to be 68-by-105 meters (74-by-115 yards) but allowed stadium operators to ignore that and keep narrower pitches.

2026: This time, stadiums have been modified to meet the standard.

**Attendance**

1994: The tournament drew a record 3.59 million, an average of 68,991 for 52 games.

2026: With twice as many matches this year, attendance of 6 million to 7 million is likely.

**Geographic scope**

1994: The 1994 tournament was played in nine stadiums, all in the U.S. The opener was played at Soldier Field in Chicago.

2026: This time, 16 stadiums are being used: 11 in the U.S., three in Mexico and two in Canada. All games from the quarterfinals on will be in the U.S. No Chicago this time: The city wasn't interested, citing what it said was a lack of financial assurances by FIFA.

**How suite it is**



1994: The tournament used five NFL sites, including the since-demolished Giants Stadium, Foxboro Stadium, Pontiac Silverdome and RFK Stadium.

2026: The 11 U.S. venues are all NFL stadiums with ample luxury suites and premium seating. Among the 1994 venues, Soldier Field remains along with the Rose Bowl, Cotton Bowl, Citrus Bowl and Stanford Stadium. None of those are being used for this World Cup.

**Water breaks**

1994: Teams played straight through in weather that at times was hot and humid.

2026: It will be hot and humid again, but this time games will have three-minute water breaks in each half, which coaches are likely to use as quick strategy sessions.

**Substitutes**

1994: Teams were allowed two substitutes, a rule first introduced for the 1990 tournament, and a new provision allowed a third for an injured goalkeeper or a keeper who received a red card. A third substitute was allowed starting in 1998 and in the event a game went to extra time, a fourth in 2018.

2026: Starting in 2022, each team may use five substitutes with a sixth possible in extra time and another at any point to replace a player who sustained a concussion.

**Name game**

Player names were added to jerseys for the 1994 tournament and have become standard in soccer. Uniform numbers became mandatory for the 1950 World Cup and fixed numbers that stayed the same throughout the tournament started in 1954. Numbers on shorts were required starting in 1974 and on the fronts of jerseys in 1994.

**Who's in charge?**

1994: A local organizing committee largely ran World Cup arrangements through the 2022 tournament; World Cup USA 1994 was headed by Alan Rothenberg, a California lawyer who headed the U.S. Soccer Federation. Rothenberg traveled the country as chief salesman of the sport.

2026: FIFA is running this year's tournament and its president, Gianni Infantino, has been most visible ingratiating himself with U.S. President Donald Trump, even bestowing a FIFA peace prize to him.

Iran Says Fans Denied World Cup Ticket Allocation



AP

**TIJUANA (MEXICO):** FIFA has revoked the ticket allocation for Iran fans at the team's three World Cup games in the United States, the national soccer federation claimed Tuesday.

Each federation for the 48 teams taking part is entitled to receive and distribute 8% of stadium capacity at the World Cup, adding up to several thousands of tickets for each game.

Just days before Iran opens its World Cup — on June 15 at the Los Angeles Rams' stadium in Inglewood against New Zealand — the federation claimed in a statement reported by semi-official state media that it was now unable to provide any tickets to its supporters.

FIFA was approached for comment.

The claim adds to the turmoil between Iranian soccer, FIFA and tournament co-host the U.S., which began military attacks on Iran on Feb. 28.

Iran's team is now based in the Mexican border city of Tijuana instead of its pre-war plan to train in Tucson, Arizona.

Some federation officials also have been denied visas to enter the U.S., where Iran also plays Belgium in Inglewood on June 21 and then Egypt in Seattle on June 26.

Federations of World Cup teams typically sell their ticket allocation to the most loyal fans who attend games at home and away.

Iran residents were subject to a travel ban by the U.S. government since last year and were unlikely to get entry visas for the World Cup. It was unclear how many tickets in Iran's allocation were sold since

Iran Seeks FIFA Approval for Ashura Armbands



Iran's Football Federation has formally requested FIFA permission for its national team players to wear black armbands during their upcoming World Cup group-stage match against Egypt, citing the occasion of Ashura.

The match is scheduled for June 27 in Seattle, falling in the immediate aftermath of Ashura, the day commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and his companions in the 7th century.

The federation said the armbands are intended as a sign of mourning and respect, and it expects FIFA to grant approval.

Ashura is observed by Shia Muslims worldwide with mourning processions, religious ceremonies, and public expressions of grief.

Iran's request comes

amid controversies related to a so-called pride event that the host country seeks to observe during the Iran-Egypt match.

Back in December, Iran's Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali confirmed Tehran has filed a formal protest with FIFA over reports that team captains in the Iran-Egypt match would be required to wear armbands associated with LGBTQ+ groups.

"We make no concessions to anyone when it comes to our beliefs," he stated.

Both Iran and Egypt rejected the requirement as incompatible with their religious and cultural values, and coordinated joint action against it.

Iranian officials called on FIFA to respect the values of all participating nations.

the tournament draw was made in December to the country's diaspora including in the U.S.

Still, FIFA president Gianni Infantino stated in 2017 — when U.S. soccer officials were preparing a co-hosting bid with Canada and Mexico they won the following year — that fans must have access to the tournament.

"It's obvious when it comes to FIFA competitions as well (that) any team, including the sup-

porters and the officials of that team, who would qualify for a World Cup need to have access to the country, otherwise there is no World Cup." Infantino said nine years ago. "That is obvious."

A FIFA-appointed match referee from Somalia was denied entry to the U.S. in Miami at the weekend and on Monday he was ruled out of taking part in the 104-game tournament that starts on Thursday.

Lord's & Gaddafi Stadium Pitches Rated as 'Unsatisfactory'

Press Trust Of India

**DUBAI:** The pitches used for the first Test between England and New Zealand at Lord's in London and the third ODI between Pakistan and Australia at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore have been rated as "unsatisfactory" under the ICC Pitch and Outfield Monitoring Process.

The two venues have been handed one demerit point each after match referees Andy Pycroft (Lord's) and Graeme La Brooy (Gaddafi Stadium) submitted their respective reports, highlighting concerns raised by match officials and captains.

Pycroft said the Lord's pitch offered excessive seam movement throughout the Test and the ball also stayed extremely low on several occasions, resulting in variable bounce.

"There was plenty of ex-

cessive seam movement throughout the Test and the ball also kept extremely low on several occasions. The bounce was variable throughout as 16 wickets fell on the first day and 17 on the second.

"There was simply an over-balance in favour of ball against bat caused by the pitch," Pycroft said about the Lord's pitch.

England defeated New Zealand by 115 runs on Day 4 of the first Test match at Lord's. Set a target of 254 runs to win, the tourists were bowled out for 138 in their second innings, giving England a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

On the Gaddafi Stadium surface, La Brooy said the pitch was slow and low, making it difficult for batters to score runs and unsuitable for a One-Day International.

"It did not suit an ODI

game as batters had to spend more time to settle in. It helped spin very early in the match and continued the same way throughout," La Brooy said.

The reports have been forwarded to the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), who have 14 days to appeal against the sanctions.

Neither Lord's nor Gaddafi Stadium had any previous demerit points.

As per ICC regulations, a venue receives one demerit point if a pitch is rated "unsatisfactory" and three points if it is rated "unfit". The points remain active for a five-year rolling period.

A venue accumulating six demerit points is suspended from hosting international cricket for 12 months, while reaching 12 demerit points results in a 24-month suspension.



Rain Washes Out 3rd Cricket Int'l in West Indies Sri Lanka Wins the Series 1-0



AP

**KINGSTON (JAMAICA):** The third one-day cricket international between West Indies and Sri Lanka went the same way as the second and was washed out Monday without a ball being bowled.

Umpires made the decision just after 6 p.m. local time to call off the match because the outfield couldn't be made ready for play even if the rain abated.

Sri Lanka won the first match of the series by 41 runs for its first ODI win in the Caribbean in 13 years. The two subsequent wash-outs have given Sri Lanka a 1-0 series victory.

"We're very happy to win the series," Sri Lanka

captain Kusal Mendis said. "We did really well in that one game in all three departments.

"There's not a lot of matches ahead of next year's World Cup and I'm happy with my first series victory as captain."

The series win was also the first for Sri Lanka's new coach, former South Africa star Gary Kirsten.

"You can't control mother nature," West Indies captain Shai Hope said. "Credit must be given to the Sri Lankan team for the way they played in the first game."

The series continues with three Twenty20 internationals, the first of which will be played at Kingston on Thursday.

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## Social Media Action Limited to Deepfakes: Vaishnaw

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Jun 9: Government's takedown action on social media posts is restricted to only deepfake content with no clampdown on genuine content creation, Union minister for electronics and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Tuesday, debunking allegations of censorship.

Recently, there have been several claims about the removal of online videos from YouTube-based channels. Online movement entity Cockroach Janata Party leader Abhijeet Dipke has also claimed that his video supporting a victim of wrong assessment by the CBSE was removed on government request.

The minister debunked claims that genuine protest videos are being removed from social media platforms.

"Absolutely not. Wherever these fake videos are, it is a duty; it is a responsibility for us, for the government, to make sure that if any deepfake video is propagating false, actually false news, then it has to be removed," Vaishnaw told PTI.

He said the society is built on trust between institutions



and asserted that trust has to be strengthened.

"To strengthen the trust, the belief in what you see, whether that is true or false, whether that is genuine or deep fake, that belief has to be strengthened through various technological methods, and that is what we are doing. In terms of per capita creation of content, if you look at it, it is not even a fraction of the content that is created, which is basically deep fake and harmful for the society which is building it," the minister said.

Vaishnaw said the government

is of the view that there is a need for a new law on fake and false information, and it will work on this along with the industry.

When asked about the status of the IT rules amendment, the minister said that there is a need to remove fake news, irrespective of who generates it. The amendment extends the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's oversight mechanism's blocking and takedown powers to users who are not registered as publishers but post or share news and current affairs content online.

## 3 Foreign Universities Cleared to Open India Campuses

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Jun 9: Two universities from UK and one from Australia were granted Letters of Approval (LoAs) to establish campuses in India, the Ministry of Education announced on Tuesday.

The move is aimed at strengthening the country's bid to become a global education hub under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, it said.

"In the presence of the Hon'ble Union Minister for Education, Dharmendra Pradhan, Letters of Approval were handed over to three globally reputed foreign universities from the UK and Australia to establish campuses in India," the ministry said on X.

The universities granted letters were the University of Bristol and the University of York from the United Kingdom, both of which will set up campuses in Mumbai, and the University of New South Wales from Australia, which will establish its campus in Bangalore.

## Court Raps Magistrate for Copy-Paste Cheque Bounce Order

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Jun 9: A Delhi court has set aside the acquittal of a man in a cheque dishonour case, saying that the trial court's verdict was a product of a mechanical "copy-paste" exercise that reflected complete "non-application of mind".

Additional Sessions Judge Hargurvarinder Singh Jaggi was hearing an appeal filed by complainant Jai Prakash Narayan against the acquittal of Satender Singh in a case under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act.

In an order dated June 6, the court said, "The advent of technology, word processors, and personal computers was intended to act as an administrative aid to the judiciary, bringing efficiency and speed to judicial drafting. However, it has birthed a dangerous and unacceptable malady, the

'Ctrl+C and Ctrl+V' (copy and paste) jurisprudence."

The appellate court found that the metropolitan magistrate who acquitted the accused in May 2024 had reproduced factual findings and legal analysis from another cheque bounce case between the same parties without independently examining the evidence in the present matter.

"The impugned judgment is vitiated by gross perversity, absolute non-application of mind, and an injudicious reliance on the 'copy-paste' function of a word processor," the court said.

According to the complaint, Narayan had advanced a friendly loan of Rs 2 lakh to Singh in July 2017. A cheque issued towards repayment was dishonoured for "funds insufficient", following which a legal notice was served and a complaint was filed.

### 8 Steps to a Clean Kitchen

- 1** No flies, pests and dirt
- 2** Wash & clean utensils thoroughly with detergent
- 3** Clean kitchen counters, floors, food appliances regularly
- 4** Defrost and clean the fridge every two weeks
- 5** Separate wet and dry waste before disposal
- 6** Separate biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste
- 7** Throw waste in covered bins only
- 8** Wash and clean waste bins regularly

**Issued in the Public Interest by**  
**Commissioner, Food & Drugs Administration, J&K**

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