



JK Transfer Row: Ruling MLAs Call For Respecting People's Mandate; Say 'Our Silence Not Weakness'

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 4: Amid differences with the Raj Bhavan over transfer of state officials, ruling Jammu and Kashmir lawmakers Friday stressed the need for all to respect people's mandate, asserting their government's efforts towards building a coordination with the LG administration should not be construed as their weakness. Jammu travel guide

"We are repeatedly saying this and this is our final

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LG Manoj Sinha Responds to NC Remarks, Says Actions Within Reorganization Act

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, April 4, : Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today asserted that all his actions have remained strictly within the framework of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act,

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Chief Minister Omar Abdullah inaugurates Almond Bloom Festival-2025 at Badamwari



■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APRIL 4: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday inaugurated the Almond Bloom Festival-2025 at Badamwari (Almond Alcove) in Srinagar's historic old city, heralding the arrival of spring in Kashmir.

"With blossoms in full glory, their fragrance fills every corner, marking the arrival of spring in Kashmir. This festival is not just a celebration of

nature's beauty but also an effort to boost tourism and promote our cultural heritage," Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said.

The event was organized by the Tourism Department in collaboration with the Floriculture Department and witnessed participation from top officials, artists and a large number of visitors, including students and tourists.

Minister of Transport Satish Sharma, Advisor to the Chief

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Sajad, Para castigate NCled Govt for 'ignoring' core issue

■ HT News Network



SRINAGAR, APR 04: :: Peoples Conference and Peoples Democratic Party on Friday criticized the government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah for "ignoring" core issues.

Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Conference (JKPC) President and MLA Handwara Sajad Lone castigated National Conference (NC) for its "failure" to oppose the Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025, which was passed by the Parliament earlier this week.

In a post on X, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) Lone questioned NC's performance in Parliament, calling it "lacklustre" and "apologetically servile." He argued that lawmakers

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LoP Sharma backs LG's transfer orders, calls National Conference a 'small regional party'

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, APR 04: Defending the recent administrative reshuffle in Jammu and Kashmir, Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly and senior BJP leader Sunil Sharma on Friday came out in strong support of Lieutenant Governor Manoj



Sinha's move to transfer 46 JKAS officers.

Talking to reporters here, LoP Sharma, according to the news agency—said, "Such decisions fall well within the purview of the LG's authority and are in line with the governance mechanism of a Union Territory."

He said that there is no need

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NC obsessed with patwari transfers, ignoring J&K's real issues: Mehbooba

'No talk on Article 370, youth still in jails, employees terminated, daily wagers in crisis, unemployment Rises, crackdowns continue'

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 04: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti on Friday launched a scathing attack on the ruling National Conference, accusing it of squandering the electoral mandate by focusing on "trivial" administrative matters while "ignoring" Jammu and Kashmir's most pressing issues.



Speaking at the PDP headquarters here, Mehbooba, according to the news agency—expressed outrage over Chief Minister Omar Abdullah convening a high-level meeting primarily to discuss the "transfer of patwaris" rather than addressing grave concerns like the "continued detention of youth, mass terminations of government employees, rampant unemployment, and the erosion of the region's special status."

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Karra, Mir, Tarigami skip CM's crucial meeting

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 04: Top leaders from the alliance, including Congress, on Friday skipped the crucial meeting called by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

The news agency—had reported on

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Rs 6,166 cr spent on J&K Smart City projects, 288 completed, 23 ongoing

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Apr 04: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs informed the Lok Sabha that 288 smart city projects have been completed in Jammu and Kashmir, while 23 projects are still ongoing.

The data, accessed by the news agency—, was presented by Minister of State, Tokhan Sahu in response to a question regarding the Smart Cities Mission (SCM).

According to the ministry, Srinagar and Jammu were selected under the SCM. As of March 4, 2025, Jammu has completed 118 out of 127 projects, utilizing Rs 2,779 crore, while 9 projects worth Rs 190 crore remain under implementation.

In Srinagar, 147 projects have been com-



pleted out of 161, with an expenditure of Rs 3,387 crore, leaving 14 projects worth Rs 240 crore ongoing.

For Ladakh, no city has been selected under the SCM, as per the government's response.

The minister further said that nationwide, 7,504 projects amounting to Rs 1,50,306 crore

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Aga Ruhullah Slams Waqf Bill Passage, Calls It 'State-Sponsored Dispossession'

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 4: KNT: Member of Parliament from Srinagar, Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, has strongly condemned the passage of the Waqf Bill in Parliament, calling it a "bel-ligerent and bigoted attack on Muslims" and a sign of deepening majoritarianism in India.

In a sharply worded statement released on Friday, Ruhullah said, "India has moved into a dark era of brute majoritarianism where minority interests



have been shown the door."

He accused the BJP-led government of reaffirming its "anti-Muslim, anti-minority intent" by pushing the Bill through "in the den of the night" without due deliberation.

The Srinagar MP expressed personal

anguish at not being allowed to speak on the Bill, despite being one of the few Muslim voices in the Lok Sabha. "Time was taken at both the introduction and passage of the Bill by the floor leader of JKNC, leaving no space for my intervention. This is structural marginalization," he stated, calling it a humiliation of the lived realities of Muslims in what he described as the "temple of democracy."

Ruhullah particularly criticized the Bill's provisions that take away

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NC leading advocate for economically, socially disadvantaged classes: Dr. Farooq



■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR APRIL 04 The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference president Dr. Farooq Abdullah Friday reiterated that JKNC will continue to stand as the leading advocate for the economically and socially disadvantaged classes.

During a meeting with a delegation from Gujjar Basti Bandipora, Dr. Farooq emphasized that the party has consistently protected their interests and implemented initiatives to enhance their living conditions.

He highlighted the recent budget presented by the Omar-led government, which allocated resources to alleviate the suffering of the poorest individuals by providing free 200 units of electricity and additional rations to those at the bottom of the economic ladder.

"The introduction of free transportation for women will also significantly improve their quality of life," Dr. Farooq said, assuring that all promises made in the party's manifesto, especially those concerning the economically and socially marginalized groups, will be fulfilled.

"The NC has a long history of advocating for the rights of the underprivileged,

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Spring Tourism Takes Off in Kashmir with Almond Bloom Festival

Director Tourism Says Valley Witnessing Surge in Visitors; Series of Cultural Events Planned Across Locations

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Apr 04: With the arrival of spring, the Kashmir Valley has come alive with celebrations and a fresh wave of tourists, Director Tourism Kashmir Raja Yaqoob said on Friday. He announced that a series of events have been lined up over the next ten days across various locations to capitalize on the seasonal tourism boom.

Speaking on the sidelines of the inauguration of the much-awaited Almond Bloom



Festival at Srinagar's Badamwari garden, Yaqoob told the news agency—that the department has planned multiple events to celebrate the spring season.

"The spring season has begun, and we've organized a series of events across the valley to showcase its beauty. These were slightly delayed due to the holy month of Ramadan," Yaqoob said. "Now, we're starting with events at Yousmarg, followed by wild tulip festivals in Pampore and cherry blossom shows, among others."

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Executive Committee CAMPA formulates Annual Plan of Operations for 2025-26

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, APRIL 4: Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force, J&K Forest Department, Suresh Kumar Gupta, today chaired the 36th meeting of the Executive Committee of J&K to review implementation of Annual Plan of Operations for 2024-25 and formulate and consider the APOs for 2025-26 under CAMPA scheme.

PCCF & HoFF, Suresh Kumar Gupta elucidated the contribution of CAMPA in achieving the target of planting 150 lakh saplings under the programme "Ek ped maa ke naam" during 2024-25. He further highlighted various ongoing works like stabilization of slopes along highways and building of infrastructure for frontline staff. He also referred to the works being undertaken for protection of forest lands through installation of boundary pillars and fencing of vul-



nerable forests. Chief Executive Officer, CAMPA, T Rabi Kumar, made a brief presentation highlighting the progress on implementation of the approved Annual Plan of Operations (APOs) 2024-25, covering actions taken on the decisions of the EC in its last meeting and proposed APOs for the next financial year 2025-26. Regarding next year's APOs, a total of about 4500 ha area has been pro-

posed to be afforested with planting of about 40 lakh saplings including beating up of causalities through assisted natural and artificial regeneration. A special emphasis is being given for soil and moisture conservation measures including construction of DRSM, crates and water harvesting structures in the APOs. Planting of local species and a mix of indigenous fodder species has been proposed to

augment the fodder supply. The Wildlife Protection Department has proposed a number of protection and conservation measures. These included improvement of wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation works, management of protected areas, creation and maintenance of animal rescue centres, eco-development activities and development of wildlife related infrastructure. The APOs also included construction and maintenance of official accommodation for frontline staff like Guard huts, Block Office and Range Office.

After detailed discussion on all aspects of the proposals, the Executive Committee considered the proposed Annual Plan of Operations for FY 2025-26 with an outlay of about Rs. 157 crore. The EC recommended the proposal for approval of the Steering Committee for onward submission to the Government of India, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change for final approval.

In 3 years, One Stop Centers provide assistance to over 6,400 domestic violence survivors in J&K

■ HT News Network

New Delhi, Apr 04 The One Stop Centres (OSCs) in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh have provided assistance to a significant number of women affected by domestic violence over the past three years.

According to data provided by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, 1,544 women in Jammu & Kashmir sought refuge at OSCs in 2021-22.

The number, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) increased to 2,482 in 2022-23 and slightly declined to 2,374 in 2023-24. In Ladakh, 26 women were assisted in 2021-22, 19 in 2022-23, and 17 in 2023-24.

Notably, the OSCs offer immediate support to survivors, including medical assistance, legal aid, police intervention, temporary shelter, and psychological counseling. Survivors can stay at the centers for up to five days, with an extension of up to 10 days in certain cases.

"Further extensions require approval from district authorities. Efforts are made to relocate survivors to long-term shelters such as Shakti Sadans when necessary," the government said, adding that it has taken several measures to assist domestic violence survivors in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh through the One Stop Centres (OSCs) and related initiatives including OSCs provide medical aid, legal assistance, police intervention, psychological counseling, and temporary shelter to survivors.

CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

MLAS

request that do not push us to the wall," National Conference chief spokesperson and MLA Zadibal Tanvir Sadiq told reporters here after an emergency ruling allies' legislature party meeting over the issue of contentious transfer.

The meeting passed two resolutions: one condemning the passage of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill by parliament, and the other calling for respecting people's mandate.

Briefing reporters after the nearly two-hour-long emergency meeting, Sadiq said, "The elections in Jammu and Kashmir were praised by the top leadership of this country for enthusiastic voting. And, now if anyone stands in a denial mode or tries to undermine it, is showing disrespect to the people's mandate."

He said the ruling alliance is of a firm opinion that the mandate of the people needs to be respected and "our coordination, whether it is with Delhi or with the LG administration, is only aimed at solving the problems of the people."

"Our coordination or our silence should not be taken as our weakness," he said.

There have been differences between the Abdullah government and the Raj Bhavan over several administrative issues, but Sinha's Tuesday order to transfer and post 48 Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service (JKAS) officers escalated the disquiet.

Expressing his strong disapproval of the transfer order, the chief minister wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, LG Sinha and the state's chief secretary, asserting these orders were issued without any "lawful authority" and undermine the authority of the elected government.

According to sources, Abdullah has asserted that the transfer of JKAS officers to cadre posts falls squarely within the elected government's purview.

The chief minister has also been pressing for finalisation of the Transaction of Business Rules, which were approved by the cabinet on March 6, and wrote that the delay in issuing these rules is contributing to the current administrative friction. Jammu travel guide

Abdullah also asked Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo to ensure that no transfer or posting orders for non-All India Services officers were issued without the CM's prior approval.

In his letter to Shah, Abdullah said a series of actions by the LG, including the contested transfers, have eroded the authority of the elected government, highlighting a growing tension between the elected administration and the LG's office.

The unscheduled legislature party meeting, chaired by Abdullah and attended by National Conference president Farooq Abdullah, was held at Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary's residence at the Gupkar Road here.

The meeting was also attended by cabinet ministers, all NC MLAs, four Congress legislators, led by chief whip Nizamuddin Bhat, and Independents supporting the Abdullah government.

The meeting also assumes significance in view of the scheduled three-day visit of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

"The meeting held a threadbare discussion on various issues and passed two important resolutions—one condemning the passing of the Waqf (Amendment) bill (in both houses of parliament), which we consider anti-minority," Tanvir Sadiq said.

He said the National Conference-led government wants a cordial relation with New Delhi and the Raj Bhavan here, but it should not be considered as "our weakness".

"We want to run this government with love and respect and work smoothly. It should not be construed as our weakness. We are

repeatedly saying this, and this is our final request that do not push us to the wall. We want coordination among the centre, LG government and our government. Do not consider our silence as weakness," he said.

Nizamuddin Bhat of Congress said the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the prevailing political situation and the Constitutional and administrative affairs.

"Both long term and short term issues of immediate consideration came up for discussion during the meeting... everyone should understand that all the MLAs in the alliance are fully behind the leader of the house—Omar Abdullah," he said.

Bhat said the party's Pradesh president Tariq Hamid Karra and legislature party leader G A Mir could not attend the meeting due to another important meeting of the party in Delhi. "I was given mandate to accompany other three MLAs in the meeting," he said.

Bhat said there was unanimity that all the issues will be resolved with New Delhi and the Raj Bhavan.

The Abdullah government regards the LG's move as a violation of the legal and administrative framework under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act. Jammu travel guide

Before entering the meeting, NC MLA from Sonawari Hilal Akbar Lone said the Raj Bhavan is "undermining" the elected government. He said the meeting would discuss the steps required to be taken so that such things do not recur.

In his letter to Sinha, Abdullah has asked him to review the "unilateral" decision, saying the transfers and postings of officers outside the All India Services cadre was the exclusive prerogative of the elected government.

Such orders undermine the functioning and authority of the elected government, Abdullah asserted in the letter. (Agencies)

LG

2019. Addressing recent concerns raised by the National Conference, Sinha clarified that he has not overstepped his constitutional limits.

"I know my boundaries and I will never cross them," Sinha said, responding to observations made during a recent NC meeting. While the LG did not name any specific decision under scrutiny, his remarks appear to be a rebuttal to the party's criticism over the administration's expanding role including recent transfers of officers in matters traditionally seen as political or legislative.

The National Conference had today held a closed-door meeting where party leaders reportedly expressed unease over what they described as the LG administration's increasing encroachment into domains that should ideally rest with an elected government. However, Sinha maintained that everything he has done falls within the legal and administrative scope provided by the 2019 Act that reorganized the former state into a Union Territory.

CM

Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Zadibal Tanvir Sadiq, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Director Floriculture, Director Tourism, and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The highlight of the festival was a grand cultural and musical show, featuring mesmerizing performances by renowned Kashmiri artists. Their soulful music captivated the audience, adding to the charm of the event. The festival also included traditional folk performances, handicraft exhibitions and stalls showcasing Kashmiri handicrafts giv-

ing visitors a taste of the Valley's rich cultural heritage.

LOP

for political controversy over transfers of officers, particularly those associated with maintaining law and order. "Transfers have been taking place in the past and will continue in the future. J&K is a Union Territory where the LG holds administrative powers, especially in areas related to law and order," he said.

He said that officers like Sub Divisional Magistrates, Additional Deputy Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners possess magisterial powers and their postings are directly handled by the LG. "Any transfers aimed at improving law and order should not be opposed by any political party or legislator. The Centre has worked tirelessly to bring stability in the region, and the situation has improved considerably over the years," Sharma said, as per KNO.

Referring to the ruling National Conference Sharma said, "The NC is a regional party from Kashmir... a small party. If they are holding meetings, we have no objection to it and don't wish to comment on it."

He added that apart from law and order-related postings, other departmental transfers—like those of engineers, directors, and lecturers—are routine matters handled by the NC-led government. "They have recently changed the Director of Education and Director of Health. These are administrative decisions and should be seen as such," Sharma said.

"People of J&K are witnessing real change and should not be misled by unnecessary political narratives. The LG is acting within his mandate," he added—

SAJAD AND PARRA

from Jammu and Kashmir, the only Muslim-majority region in India, should have taken a stronger stand against the bill.

"The parliamentarians from J&K should have roared like a lion, not meowed like a cat," he wrote.

Lone assured his party's unconditional support for any Waqf-related bill brought in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, where the NC is the ruling party.

"If the National Conference has any such intentions, we will support it," he added.

Meanwhile, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader and MLA Pulwama, Waheed-ur-Rehman Para in a post on X, said that the ruling NC was focusing on powers to transfer officers instead of resisting the changes enforced post August 2019.

"A party in Jammu and Kashmir that once appointed its own Sadr-e-Riyasat (Head of State) and Prime Minister is now fighting over tehsildar appointments, not rights. Goalposts aren't just shifting, they've hit rock bottom. Fifty MLAs unite, not for resisting August 5, but for KAS transfers. Focus on symptoms only, not on August 5?" Parra wrote in a post.

The Pulwama MLA accused the National Conference of surrendering and normalising the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

"You started by surrendering and normalising August 5, expecting them to facilitate you because you facilitated them. If only you had taken a stand, appointed your own Advocate General, nominated five MLAs, and never compromised on (Article) 370 resolution (for restoration of statehood), transfers would have been on your platter," Parra said.

"You refused to stand for July 13 (the Martyr's Day holiday, which was scrapped in 2019), and the Waqf Bill was just empty rhetoric. Now, the same cabinet that justified the same bureaucrats in a month-long assem-

bly session is complaining about them?" he said—

MEHBOOBA

"People believed that a new government would come and protect our rights, but instead, our rights have been robbed. They thought this government would address the hardships, the problems, unemployment, and other issues—that it would protect us. But sadly, six months have passed, and there has been no talk of the youth rotting in jails, no discussion about our employees being terminated. Daily wagers are struggling—the youth are unemployed, there's an atmosphere of crackdowns, raids are being conducted everywhere," Mehbooba said.

The former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister as per Kashmir News Observer lambasted the NC's reluctance to confront the Central Government on substantive issues, noting that even as basic amenities fail and institutions like the historic Jama Masjid remain shuttered, the ruling party remains silent. "They say, 'We don't want confrontation with the Centre. No one wants conflict with Delhi, but you surrendered before even trying! You're too afraid to even speak about the issues for which people voted for you. For the transfer of a patwari, an entire alliance of MLAs gathers—this is why the people of Jammu and Kashmir voted for you? Is the patwari's transfer their only concern? Is that the biggest issue—or is it the youth languishing in jails?'"

She said that it is concerning that the NC led government has adopted a stoic silence on core issues confronting Jammu and Kashmir. "The moment they [NC] formed the government, they surrendered. Now look—train being inaugurated will be stopped at Katra,—did Omar sahib speak up about this? Did he even call the railway minister? What are they even doing? They don't take a stand on issues that actually matter. Forget Article 370—they don't even dare take its name," said Mehbooba.

According to the PDP President, the real problems—causing people pain every day, the growing hardships—no one talks about it. "Instead, they [NC] ask: 'Why did the LG sahib transfer the patwari? Why can't we do it?'" To me, this is absurd. A government with such a massive mandate—and they're wasting time on petty issues, calling big meetings over trivial matters. This, I believe, is a mockery of the mandate people gave them," said Mehbooba Mufti—

MIR AND KARRA

Thursday that the two leaders including Jammu and Kashmir Congress chief, Tariq Hameed Karra and senior Congress leader Ghulam Ahmad Mir would skip "emergency meeting" of legislators from the ruling alliance called by the Chief Minister in Srinagar.

Senior Congress leader Nizam-ud-din Bhat while talking to the reporters here said that the two leaders couldn't attend the meeting due to prior commitments in New Delhi.

Moreover, MLA Kulgam, Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami also skipped the meeting due to prior commitments in Tamil Nadu, sources said.

Pertinently, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah chaired a crucial meeting at Deputy Chief Minister's official residence at Fairview, Gupkar, Srinagar in which around 46 MLAs participated wherein two resolutions were passed—one condemning the passage of the Waqf Bill in Parliament and the other urging the Union government to respect the people's mandate in the Union Territory—

SMART CITY

projects worth Rs 14,239 crore still ongoing.

However, the government does not plan to expand the mission or undertake additional Smart City projects beyond the 100 cities originally selected, the minister added—

AGA

Waqf Board autonomy, abolish "Waqf by user," and potentially allow encroachers to claim Muslim religious properties. He termed it "state-sponsored dispossession" and vowed to continue resisting what he sees as an assault on the rights and heritage of the Muslim community.

"The fight will grow stronger," he declared, as discontent over the Bill grows in various sections of the Muslim community across the country. [KNT]

DR. FAROOQ

and under the leadership of the Omar-led government, this mission will persist," he added.

Later, Dr. Farooq attended Friday congregational prayers at Asar-e-Sharif Dargah Hazratbal, where he prayed for lasting peace and prosperity in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh

SPRING

The Director particularly highlighted the significance of Kashmir's cherry blossoms, calling them an underrated attraction. "We want to promote cherry blossoms as a signature feature of Kashmir's spring tourism," he added.

Yaqoob noted that the tourism surge is evident from packed hotels and busy flight schedules. "Hotels are operating at 80-90% occupancy across the valley. Srinagar Airport is handling 54 daily flights, all full, with ticket prices crossing Rs 10,000—clear indicators of heavy tourist inflow," he said.

The official explained that the cultural and musical programs serve dual purposes: entertaining visitors while promoting peace and providing local artists a platform. "Such events help put these destinations on the tourist map," Yaqoob remarked.

He described the ongoing festivities as both a celebration of spring and proof of Kashmir's growing appeal among travelers.

Earlier in the day, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah inaugurated the Almond Bloom Festival at the historic Badamwari garden in Srinagar's old city, officially marking spring's arrival in the Valley. The event was attended by tourism officials and other dignitaries—

Terroists, Security Forces

Exchange Fire in Duggan,

Kathua; Area Cordoned Off

Kathua, Apr 4: A fresh exchange of fire took place between security forces and terrorists in Duggan area of Billawar in Kathua district on Friday evening.

A top police official confirmed to news agency JKNS that security forces launched a cordon and search operation in the area following inputs about the presence of terrorists.

During the operation, terrorists opened fire, triggering a fresh exchange of fire. The area has been cordoned off and additional reinforcements have been rushed, the officer said.

Further details are awaited. (JKNS)



Meet Tahira Bashir from Kulgam who cultivated success through mushroom farming

Encouraged over a dozen women to start own ventures

Farooq Rather

Kulgam, Apr 04: In the historical village of Qaimoh in south Kashmir's Kulgam district, a woman is making a mark with her determination and entrepreneurial spirit. Tahira Bashir has turned to organic mushroom cultivation, not just as a means of livelihood but as a path to financial independence as through her efforts, she has ensured an annual income of Rs 75,000 for her family. Speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Tahira shared her journey of transformation, which began when she received training in mushroom cultivation through the Agricultural Department in Kashmir. With this knowledge, she established her mushroom-growing unit at her home. Backed by the unwavering support of her family, Tahira credits her success to the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) department.



"I came across various schemes through NRLM that benefited me immensely. I am grateful to my trainers who guided and supported me throughout this journey," she said. Tahira first cultivated mushrooms in a small room in her home. Her first attempt at harvesting locally known mushrooms, 'Heddar', was a success. Encouraged by the positive response, she approached the agriculture department for more mushroom bags to expand her

venture. "Through cultivation, I not only earned a livelihood for my family but also helped others in marketing their mushrooms. I personally marketed produce from five such units," she said. Her business has made her feel financially independent, inspiring other educated women in the area to follow suit. Before venturing into this field, Tahira faced financial hardships. She used her earnings to support her family and reinvested in her business for expansion.

The mushroom cultivation process is straightforward: after sowing the mushroom seeds, the crop matures in a few weeks. Once ready, the mushrooms are carefully packaged into small boxes and sold in vegetable markets at prices ranging from Rs 25 to Rs 50 per box. Tahira's success story has now encouraged nearly a dozen other women in the district to start their own mushroom units. "This is an easy and safe business for unemployed youth, especially girls, to start and become independent," she said. She is now making pickles of these mushrooms and selling them in markets and getting handsome returns. Over the years, mushrooms have gained popularity as a nutritious vegetable in Kashmir. The traditional Kashmiri multi-course cuisine, Wazwan, now includes a delicacy called Mushroom Yakhni, a rich curry cooked with yogurt and spices. The increasing demand for mushrooms presents an excellent opportunity for aspiring entrepreneurs—

Hakeem Yaseen calls for clarity between govt, admin, demands restoration of statehood

HT News Network

Srinagar, April 04: Hakeem Muhammad Yaseen, President of Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Front (PDF) and former minister, expressed serious concern over the prevailing confusion between the administration and the government in Jammu and Kashmir. He said this ambiguity has left the people disillusioned and uncertain about who holds real authority in the Union Territory. "It is unfortunate that a region once known for its identity and glory is now facing a crisis of leadership. Since 1952, the leadership in Jammu and Kashmir has prioritized securing their positions over addressing the genuine concerns of the people," Yaseen said. Criticizing recent political moves, Hakeem Yaseen stated that merely passing resolutions is not a meaningful form of opposition. "Resolutions do not bring revolutions. They are only attention-seeking tools and rarely lead to real action on the ground," he said. Appealing to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, Yaseen stressed that Jammu and Kashmir remain a sensitive region where people continue to suffer due to policy uncertainty and a lack of political will. "When confusion dominates governance, how can we expect peace, employment, or the eradication of poverty?" he questioned. Hakeem Yaseen urged the central government to reconsider its approach towards Jammu and Kashmir. "The people should not continue to suffer. The Centre must show statesmanship and restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir," he demanded.

After mustard fields, wild tulips in Pampore Karewas mesmerise tourists

HT News Network

Srinagar, Apr 04: Following the blooming spectacle of mustard fields, the Karewas of Pampore—famously known as the Saffron Town—are now witnessing a new wave of tourist influx, captivated by the vibrant spread of wild tulips that have transformed the landscape into a floral wonderland. With the golden-yellow mustard blossoms forming a vivid backdrop, the soft hues of pink and white wild tulips have created a mesmerising contrast, drawing both tourists and locals to the elevated plateau lands of Pampore. The scenic fusion of colours has turned the Karewas into a photographer's delight, with many visitors halting along the national highway to admire and capture the ethereal beauty. As reported by the news agency—Kashmir News



Observer, the blossoming wild tulips have become a major seasonal attraction. Travellers are increasingly making impromptu stops at the Pampore Karewas, enchanted by the natural charm of the tulips swaying gently in the spring breeze. The flowers have also become a favourite backdrop for photo shoots and nature walks. Local youth, traditionally engaged in the sale of world-renowned Kashmiri saffron to visiting tourists, say they are now witnessing thousands of people thronging

the saffron fields—not just for the prized spice, but to witness the wild tulips in their full spring glory. School excursions to the fields are becoming common, with students delighted by the opportunity to connect with nature in such a picturesque setting. Vishnu, a tourist from Kerala, described Kashmir's natural allure as unmatched. "This place truly lives up to its name—paradise on earth. While autumn in the saffron fields is breathtaking, spring brings a different magic with these tulips in bloom,"

he said. Rahul, a visitor from Uttar Pradesh, said, "I was compelled to stop my car. The sheer beauty of the Pampore Karewas, now adorned with these elegant tulips, is simply irresistible," he remarked, while expressing his admiration for Kashmir's serene landscapes. Tourists expressed that Kashmir remains a welcoming and safe destination for travellers from across India. They urged fellow citizens to witness the enchanting tulip bloom in Pampore and explore the valley's other stunning locales. They also praised the region's warm hospitality and called it a must-visit destination for nature lovers. Meanwhile, officials revealed that the tulips growing in Pampore's saffron fields belong to the species Tulipa Stellata—a naturally occurring perennial herb from the Liliaceae family.

Youth Killed, Three Injured in Budgam Road Accident

HT News Network

Budgam, Apr 4: A 25-year-old youth lost his life in a road accident in the Kulbugh-Wagar area of central Kashmir's Budgam district on Friday. Officials said the accident occurred when a Tavera vehicle (JK04C-7617) collided with an Alto car (JK04E-5376), resulting in injuries to four people. Among them, Zeeshan Ahmad Thokar, a resident of Thokerpora Budgam, sustained critical injuries and was rushed to District Hospital Budgam, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. Medical officials at DH Budgam confirmed that the deceased had suffered severe head trauma and showed no signs of responsiveness upon arrival. Police in this regard have registered a case under relevant sections of law.

Forest Department Convene Meeting to Combat Rising Forest Fires

HT News Network

Srinagar April 04: A meeting focussing on forest fire prevention and management was held under the chairmanship of Conservator of Forests, Srinagar Circle, Tawheed Ahmad Deva at Sheikhbagh Forest Complex in Srinagar today. The meeting was attended by Joint Director Forest Protection Force, Kashmir, all Divisional Forest Officers of Srinagar Circle and all Deputy Directors of Forest Protection Force and Wildlife Wardens of Kashmir Region. The primary agenda addressed the recent forest fires that have impacted various forest divisions within the Kashmir Region. Participants conducted a thorough review of the current situation, analyzed the causes of the fires, and strategized on enhanced prevention and mitigation measures. "The protection of our forests is paramount," stated the CF Srinagar. "We are committed to implementing proactive measures to safeguard these vital ecosystems and ensure the safety of our communities." During the meeting, it was emphasized that all forest fire control rooms across the districts are operating 24x7. These control rooms are functioning with the joint coordination of the Forest Department, Forest Protection Force, and Wildlife Protection Department, ensuring a swift and effective response to any fire incidents.

Miscreants vandalise SKUAST-K's tulip centre in Kokernag

HT News Network

Kokernag, Apr 04: Miscreants vandalised the Center of Excellence for Tulips at SKUAST-K's Mountain Crop Research Station (MCRS) here in South Kashmir last night, officials said on Friday. An official while talking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said the miscreants caused massive damage to the newly emerging tourist attraction at Tangpawa Sagam in Kokernag. "Nearly 80% of the tulip cultivation has been destroyed. Fifty thousand tulip bulbs, sourced from the Floriculture Department had been planted in the garden this year," he said, adding, "FIR has been registered and investigation has commenced to identify the miscreants responsible for the act." Talking to KNO Dr. Mohammad Ayoub Manto, Head of the Mountain Research Centre expressed deep anguish over the damage. "This is a very unfortunate incident. We had just started gaining momentum in local tulip production, and this centre had become a source of livelihood and pride for the people here," he said. A local entrepreneur from Sagam said people who had put up stalls have now been left without work, as visitors are unlikely to come after this unfortunate act. "There was a continuous rush of visitors here—what will they see now? The livelihood of people has come to a halt." A tourist from Uttarakhand said they had watched a video on social media and decided to visit the spot, but there was nothing left to see as the tulip bloom has been destroyed—

10 injured in twin Qazigund accidents

HT News Network

Qazigund, Apr 04: Ten people were injured in two separate road accidents along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway in Qazigund area of South Kashmir's Kulgam district on Friday. An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer) that a Tata Mobile vehicle skidded off the road near Mir Bazar in the morning, injuring five people. All the injured, residents of Bakerwal Check Manzmo, were shifted to Government Medical College (GMC) Anantnag for treatment. In another incident at Levdoora Flyover, five passengers were injured in a head-on collision between two vehicles. The accident occurred due to high speed, officials said. Police, including SDPO and SHO Qazigund, reached the spot and evacuated the injured to a nearby hospital. All ten injured people are said to be in stable condition.

Over 28,000 women benefited from Gol's empowerment schemes in J&K, Ladakh

HT News Network

Srinagar, Apr 04 More than 28,000 women in Jammu & Kashmir and 2,500 in Ladakh have received assistance under the Government of India's Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW) scheme in the financial year 2024-25, according to data released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The HEW initiative, part of the broader Mission Shakti program, is aimed at empowering women by providing them with access to legal aid, financial literacy programmes and government welfare schemes. According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the numbers indicate a steady increase in the scheme's reach, with J&K assisting 24,574 women in 2023-24 and 17,110 in 2022-23, while Ladakh helped 160 women last year and 799 this year. Meanwhile, under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), which provides financial assistance to pregnant



and lactating mothers, over 1.41 lakh women in Jammu & Kashmir and 2,510

in Ladakh received benefits in 2024-25. The scheme offers a Rs 6,000 cash incentive to eligible mothers, ensuring better maternal health and nutrition. Despite the rising number of beneficiaries, officials acknowledge challenges in reaching women in remote areas. In regions like Keran, Gurez, and Kargil, difficult terrain and lack of awareness have limited accessibility. The government has been conducting door-to-door campaigns and using digital platforms to improve outreach. The Ministry has launched a 100-day women's empowerment campaign under HEW, focusing on health camps, gender sensitization workshops, and community mobilisation efforts. Special registration drives for PMMVY are also being conducted in the rural belts of Kashmir and Ladakh to maximise coverage. With the Union Territory administrations prioritising women's welfare and financial independence, the success of these schemes will be crucial in shaping gender-inclusive development in the region—



EDITORIAL

LG, CM at loggerheads
over transfer of JKAS
officers

A war of words has broken out between Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and chief minister Omar Abdullah over the recent transfer order of 48 Jammu Kashmir Administrative Service (JKAS) officers. The transfer order was issued by the LG even though the same falls under the purview of the office of the elected government. The transfer order led to flutters among the ranks of the union territory government led by the National Conference.

The NC legislators along with the legislators of their ally parties convened a meeting today and took serious note of the transfer order of JKAS officers. These lawmakers referred to the issuance of transfer order as interference in the functioning of the elected government. They said that the LG has no authority to issue transfer orders of JKAS officers. The legislators made it clear that they have been cooperating with the LG office in the day to day working but the same should not be taken as their weakness.

Ever since the Omar Abdullah led government assumed office in October last year some of the issues have led to differences among the LG and CM. But this is for the first time that a war of words has broken out between the two power centres. The controversy over the recent transfer order has led to some disillusionment among the civil officers who fail to understand as to whom to listen and whom not to. As a result of this one cannot rule out lackadaisical attitude from the people at helm.

In such a scenario it is the common man who suffers and as a result of the same day to day problems would remain unresolved. There would be administrative anarchy in Jammu & Kashmir and one wonders who would be responsible for the same. Last month the cabinet gave a nod to the business rules for the proper functioning of the elected government. The same were sent to the LG office for approval and since that date there has been no communication from the Raj Bhavan.

The latest round of controversy does not augur well for the future of Jammu & Kashmir and there are chances that restoration of statehood may take some more time. As the home minister Amit Shah is coming to Jammu on April 6 it remains to be seen how the situation emerges in the next day or two. People more so the politicians have their fingers crossed over the same.

Growing economy: Is everyone getting benefited?



PROF. MAHESH CHAND GUPTA

Income inequality has become a serious issue in the Indian economy. This is affecting the economic development of the society and the nation. Equal distribution of income is necessary for a balanced economy. Uneven income affects purchasing power and increases economic imbalance. The gap between rich and poor is increasing. Wealth is getting concentrated in a few hands. Its result is coming in the form of deteriorating condition of the common man.

It is a matter of happiness that the country's economy is growing rapidly and it is included in the top five economies of the world but the country is still lagging behind in terms of per capita income. According to the World Bank, India is ranked 140th on the basis of per capita income. Growing population and income inequality are the main reasons for this. India's population has crossed 140 crores which is 18 percent of the global population.

According to the World Inequality Database, wealth inequality has increased in India. In 1961, the top 10 percent of the richest people owned 44.9 percent of the total

wealth, which increased to 64.6 percent in 2023. Similarly, the top 0.1 percent owned 3.2 percent of the wealth in 1961, which increased to 29 percent in 2023. India is counted among the countries with the highest wealth inequality in the world. The top 10 percent of the people own 77 percent of the total national wealth, while the richest 1 percent own 53 percent of the wealth. In contrast, half of the poor people in the country are struggling for just 4.1 percent of the national wealth.

India is also among the top countries in terms of income inequality. According to the World Inequality Report 2022, the top 10 percent of the people own 57 percent of the total national income and the top 1 percent own 22 percent, while the share of the bottom 50 percent has remained at just 13 percent. If we look at the statistics, the tax burden on the poor people of the country is the highest. The inequality in the tax system is evident. The bottom 50 percent of people in India pay 64 percent of the total GST, while the top 10 percent contribute only 4 percent.

Obviously, income inequality has serious effects. Due to the limited purchasing power of low-income people, the demand in the market decreases, which increases economic imbalance. The high income group spends more on luxury items while the low income group is limited to essential goods. When people of the low income group do not have sufficient purchasing power, the sales of producers and service providers decrease, which affects the stability of the economy. A similar envi-

ronment is being seen in the markets of our country today.

Low-income people spend most of their income on daily consumption items like grains, pulses, vegetables and other food items, housing rent or repairs and basic health services and children's education. In contrast, middle class consumers spend on their necessities as well as some luxury and comfort related items like smartphones, televisions, refrigerators, branded clothes and fashion related items and also on travel, cinema, food in restaurants. In contrast, people included in the category of super rich of India are spending on luxury items. According to The Wealth Report 2024 released by real estate consultant Knight Frank, Indian ultra-rich invest 17 percent of their investable assets in luxury items, with watches being given the highest priority, followed by art and jewelry. Super rich people in fourth place buy classic cars. This is followed by the purchase of luxury handbags, wine, rare whiskey, furniture, colored diamonds and coins. However, globally, the super-rich show their preference for luxury watches and classic cars. According to the report, the demand for rare collectibles is increasing in India across different age groups.

Due to low income in cities and towns, people are facing difficulty in getting good health facilities, education and housing. People with low incomes are struggling to meet basic needs. Income inequality deprives poor people of opportunities. Due to lack of higher education and technical skills, people are unable to enter good jobs and high-

paying sectors. Competition in big industries and global markets has a negative impact on small traders and low-paid workers. Due to differences in social and economic structure, some sections get more opportunities while other sections are left behind. There is a possibility of increasing poverty and social tension due to income inequality. Poverty is increasing, that is why the government has to give free food grains to 81 crore people.

By the way, last year the government claimed that 95 per cent poverty has been reduced in the country. Only 5 percent of the people are now below the poverty line. NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subramaniam made this claim based on the analysis of the National Sample Survey Office. This survey was conducted among 2,61,746 families during August 2022 to July 2023. The big question is that if 95 percent of the people have come out of the poverty line, then who are those 81 crore people who are getting free food grains from the government? After all, for whom has the central government extended the scheme costing Rs 11 lakh 80 thousand crore under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana for the next five years in January last year? According to a World Bank report released last year, about 12.9 crore Indians are facing poverty. The daily income of such people is less than Rs 181 (2.15 dollars). The government is providing food grains to the poor. Various schemes are being run to raise the economic level of the poor, it is commendable. This is the responsibility of every welfare government, but the situation will change only when the

income inequality ends. Currently, India is ranked 140th on the basis of per capita income. Unless it is brought to the top 10, there is no hope of change in the situation. To eliminate income inequality, the government should promote high quality education and vocational training so that people can become more qualified. A fair tax system is also the need of the hour. By adopting a balanced tax system, more tax can be taken from the high income group and relief can be given to the lower income group. It is also possible to reduce inequality by increasing the minimum wage and protecting labor rights. It is possible to strengthen the purchasing power of the poor by expanding the public distribution system and making essential commodities available to them at affordable rates. We can increase per capita income by focusing on education, technology, infrastructure and employment. Income inequality is not only an economic problem but also a social problem. If the government and policy makers take concrete steps in this direction, purchasing power will be strengthened and it will be possible to create a balanced and inclusive economy. India has now become the country with the largest population in the world, so new policies are necessary to bring the poor section into the mainstream of economic development. Otherwise, the challenges facing the country will become more serious in the future.

(The author is a renowned educationist, speaker and thinker. He is also the coordinator of Delhi University Foundation)

Academics vs. Belief: The Path To Wisdom

ER. AMIR GULAM LONE

The pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of belief have long been considered pillars of human progress. Yet, in an era defined by rapid technological advancement and shifting cultural norms, the relationship between academics and belief can often seem contradictory or misunderstood. This article aims to illuminate the complementary nature of these forces, revealing how their balance is essential for true wisdom.

Academics

Academics form the bedrock of intellectual growth. Through study, observation, and analysis, academics equip

individuals with the tools to question, discover, and innovate. The sciences, humanities, and arts each contribute uniquely to shaping a comprehensive understanding of the world. They challenge assumptions, foster critical thinking, and inspire exploration. The academic path, however, is not without limitations. Knowledge, though powerful, can remain sterile if confined to the realm of pure intellect. Facts and theories may illuminate how the world works but can struggle to answer why it matters.

Belief: Belief, whether rooted in spirituality, ethics, or personal convictions, provides an essential anchor for the human experience. It

imbues life with purpose and nurtures resilience. Where academics seek evidence and rationality, belief offers trust and meaning. It is belief that gives strength in uncertainty, that allows individuals to navigate challenges with hope and determination. Yet, belief without the discernment of knowledge risks becoming dogmatic, detached from reality or misdirected. Just as a ship without a rudder is at the mercy of the waves, belief unguided by understanding can lead to a perilous drift.

The harmony of intellect and conviction

True wisdom arises at the intersection of academics and belief. When knowledge is complemented by deep con-

viction, intellect becomes purposeful, and belief becomes enlightened. Consider the great minds of history: philosophers, scientists, and leaders who harnessed their intellect but were equally driven by unwavering beliefs—beliefs that their work served a higher calling or profound truth. This balance allows for the creation of solutions that are not only effective but ethical; progress that is not only innovative but humane.

Avoiding extremes

An overemphasis on academics without belief can lead to cold rationalism—an existence driven by data, devoid of empathy or deeper values. On the other hand, belief devoid of intellectual

scrutiny can result in blind faith, where critical questions are dismissed, and progress is stifled. Wisdom lies in harmony: a mind that seeks to learn endlessly, paired with a heart that believes deeply.

Bringing it together

To cultivate this harmony, one must actively seek both academic learning and personal belief. Engage with diverse knowledge and challenge your perspectives, but also take time for introspection and nurture your guiding values. Ask not just, "What do I know?" but also, "What do I stand for?" By fostering this balance, individuals can navigate life with clarity, making choices that are both informed and meaningful.

Bin Tere Bechain—A' unique story of love, passion, and mental turmoil in Haryanvi cinema



DR. SATYAWAN SAURABHI

The Haryanvi film industry is gradually breaking its boundaries and moving beyond traditional stories. In this direction, 'Bin Tere Bechain' is a unique film that explores the addiction of love and its deep effects. This film is made under Rajrahi Productions, and its hero is Vinod Mehra (VM Bechain).

The changing landscape of Haryanvi cinema

Traditionally, Haryanvi films have primarily focused on rural life, humor, and cultural values. But in recent years, the industry has

started focusing on new stories and modern issues. 'Bin Tere Bechain' is part of this new wave, which attempts to examine an untouched subject—love addiction. The film is not just a simple love story but also shows the passion and instability that can sometimes ruin people's lives in the name of love.

A different story, a different perspective

Usually love stories are limited to romance and a happy ending, but 'Bin Tere Bechain' takes an unusual path. The film shows that love is not just happiness but can also become an addiction—an obsession that can disconnect a person from reality. The film presents this dark side of love and obsession in a very impressive way.

The main character of the film is a man who is ready to go to any extent to get

his love. But as the story progresses, he finds himself trapped in a world where love only causes pain and suffering. This story depicts the reality of many people who lose themselves in love and even erase their identity.

Music—a combination of pain and passion

The title song of the film 'Bin Tere Bechain' has already made a place in the hearts of the audience due to its sensitive melody and deep lyrics. Available on SoundCloud and YouTube, this song beautifully expresses the passion and pain of love. The music of the film adds more depth to the emotion of the story.

Music has a special significance in Haryanvi cinema, as it is the most effective medium to connect the audience to the story. The songs of this film are not just made for entertainment, but they

also reflect the theme and emotion of the film. Apart from the title track, other songs in the film also connect the audience emotionally.

New face of Haryanvi cinema

'Bin Tere Bechain' is a new experiment for Haryanvi cinema. It is not just entertainment but an experience that makes the audience think. This film is a clear indication that Haryanvi cinema is no longer limited to comedy and traditional narratives, but it is also ready to embrace new and unusual subjects.

Looking at the growth of the Haryanvi film industry, it won't be wrong to say that it is now gearing up to compete with Bollywood and other regional cinema. Films like 'Bin Tere Bechain' are proof of this change, showing that there is no dearth of diversity and innovation in

Haryanvi cinema either.

Love addiction—an overlooked aspect

Most love stories portray love as a positive emotion, but this film focuses on the intoxication and addiction of love. This is a subject on which very few films have been made. Love addiction is a real problem that is usually ignored.

Many people fall so deeply in love that they forget about their career, family, and even their own identity. This film serves as a warning and makes the audience think about whether their love is really making them happy or just harming their mental and emotional stability.

The characters and their depth in the film

The lead character in the film is shown as a complex and deep personality. The character is completely in

love, and her world revolves only around her lover. But as the story progresses, we see that her obsession slowly destroys her.

The villain of the film is not an outsider but the mindset and addiction of the main character himself. It is a unique perspective that forces the audience to think about who the real enemy is—society, circumstances, or their own desires?

See and decide for yourself.

If you want to watch a film that is different from the conventional stream of Haryanvi cinema, then 'Bin Tere Bechain' might be for you. You can watch it online on the STAGE app and experience for yourself how deep and unique this journey of love can be.

The cinematography, background score, and acting of the film make it a complete experience. If you

are interested in emotional stories and psychological themes, then this film will definitely be a great choice for you.

Conclusion

'Bin Tere Bechain' is not for everyone—it is for those who have the courage to understand the shadows of love. The film focuses more on the bitterness of love than its celebration, and that is what makes it special. It is not just a love story but also a psychological journey that highlights various aspects of love and its addiction.

What is your opinion about this new experiment in Haryanvi cinema? Do you think that more such films should be made that are different from the traditional pattern?

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The influence of capitalism on religious institutions: A conflict perspective analysis

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Religion has remained one of the main institutions of society from the very beginning. It has remained a functional prerequisite in society. It was a key institution in allocating roles and status and served as a social control mechanism before the period of modernization in Europe and later in other parts of the world.

Modernization in Europe brought ideas such as liberty, equality, justice, empiricism, logic, and enlightenment, with the Industrial Revolution emerging as a dominant force in society. Religion was replaced by a central authority with a private/basic authority for individuals. The father of sociology referred to this modernity stage as the Positive Stage or Scientific Stage. Science took a central place in society. Over time, science introduced the idea of the engine to the world, leading to the Industrial Revolution, especially in England.

This Industrial Revolution led to the development of a new system called capitalism, as defined by Karl Marx. Later, capitalism became a dominant force in society and remained so. Marx referred to it as the superstructure, while

other institutions such as family, marriage, kinship, religion, and the political system formed the basic structure of society. It is the superstructure that influences and dominates the basic structure of society.

Capitalist ideology gained central importance in society after modernity in Europe and then spread across the world through various means. The primary aim of capitalist ideology is profit maximization. To achieve this, capitalists initiated international business models and adopted various strategies to expand globally. As a result, no institution of society has remained unaffected by capitalism.

For instance, the joint family system transformed into the nuclear family system due to capitalism's impact, particularly through employment opportunities. This shift affected social roles and, ultimately, the process of socialization, leading to new problems such as child abuse and elderly neglect. Many elderly parents and children lack caregivers, leading to alienation in every society. People no longer have time to spend with their families, as everyone is occupied with work and living within a calculated, time-bound routine.

Max Weber referred to this phenomenon as the "iron cage," while



Karl Marx had already predicted this alienation at the onset of capitalism. Marx argued that people would become alienated from the products they produce, from themselves, and from their own species. This alienation has impacted every institution of society. Capitalists have used institutions for their own benefit and profit maximization, a reality we are witnessing today.

Despite a majority of people living above the poverty line, dis-

satisfaction remains prevalent. Inflation is a major factor, but capitalism has created a culture of "more and more," making people constantly strive for excessive material gain. Capitalism has not directly infiltrated every institution but has done so through the spread of materialistic values.

Capitalism has also significantly influenced religion, particularly after the Industrial Revolution in England. As capitalism emerged as a dominant force, it replaced

religion as the central authority in society. While capitalism has introduced positive changes such as employment, improved living standards, and competition, its negative impact—particularly materialism—has been far more profound.

Materialism has penetrated people's minds and dominated the institutions of society. In sociological terms, this process is called institutionalization—where society begins to accept materialism as a norm. Through materialism, capitalism has infiltrated every religion. In today's postmodern society, religion is often used as a commercial tool for generating profit. This transformation is difficult for society to recognize, as it operates in a hidden manner. Marx was the first to observe this phenomenon in European society, followed by his followers and scholars who studied and understood his theories.

Recently, an incident in Kashmir shocked society, leading individuals to discuss its causes and consequences from various perspectives. However, these perspectives and organizations often represent self-interests rather than an objective analysis of the issue. If these groups were not driven by organizational interests, they would unite under a common ideology, especially

given the immense damage their divisions have caused to society.

Many people fail to recognize the hidden structural forces that influence them directly or indirectly. These forces function as an invisible power in society. Émile Durkheim referred to this as "sui generis", meaning an independent reality beyond individual control. Understanding this capitalist trap is nearly impossible for those with only religious knowledge. Religious scholars often assume that people engage in materialistic behaviors consciously, but in reality, a system is at work that creates social pressure compelling individuals to act in certain ways.

Capitalists have commodified religion to maximize profit, altering its original form through internal and external influences. Just as other institutions have evolved, religion has also undergone transformation. In the postmodern era, no institution retains its original essence, leading to recurring societal crises. However, there are still individuals in society who uphold religious principles and work towards humanitarian causes to foster social harmony through religion.

The writer is a PhD scholar in Sociology

Education Reforms In J&K Need Sustained Efforts, Not Soda Bottle Enthusiasm

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Education is the soul of any enlightened society. Our society will struggle to thrive without significant advancements in the education system. Government schools have always remained a fundamental means of education for the children of the vast poor population in Kashmir who cannot afford the heavy expenses of privately run institutions. Who can imagine a student from a rural area, with a poor family background and no literate family member, becoming a doctor, teacher, or anything else if government schools are removed from the equation?

A person like me, from a village with ongoing financial struggles, would not have been able to complete an M.Sc. in Biochemistry, pursue research, and become a teacher without a government school. As an offshoot of a government school, my heart feels heavy seeing the decline in the quality of education in these institutions.

Bringing government schools on par with private institutions is

quite possible. Every government teacher knows this, but a fresh push and consistent efforts are required from all stakeholders.

In Jammu and Kashmir, a decline in government school numbers and concerns about the quality of education and student learning outcomes are emerging as major challenges. The following facts reveal this growing issue:

- The number of government schools in J&K has dramatically decreased in the past decade, from 23,874 in 2014-15 to 18,785 in 2023-24.

- Many primary schools have either been closed or merged due to low student enrollment. Numerous schools have enrollment numbers close to zero.

- The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024 highlights that only 47.2% of students at the middle level in government schools can read a second-standard-level text, and over 70% struggle to solve basic division problems.

- The number of students at the middle level who could read a second-standard-level text has declined from 55.5% in 2018 to

47.2% in 2024.

This data is a clear indicator of a breakdown in the education system. Urgent reforms are required to rejuvenate the system. However, these efforts must be continuous—not just a short-lived burst of enthusiasm in March after the long winter break.

Some Reforms to Address the Problem:

1. Infrastructure Deficiencies

Many government schools lack essential infrastructure such as drinking water and toilets. Several primary schools operate in rented buildings. In my vicinity alone, at least five primary and middle schools are run in rented buildings without playground facilities or basic infrastructure. The government should discontinue the practice of running schools in rented buildings, as their overall setting is neither appealing nor promising.

2. Lack of Trust in Government Schools by Teachers Themselves

Does a government school teacher truly believe in the education sector they serve? As per the scheme, RETs (Rehbar-e-Taleem teachers) are adjusted in their

own villages. Yet, more than 90% of RETs continue to enroll their own children in private schools. A government school teacher often encourages people to enroll their children in government schools but fails to do so themselves.

The government should implement a clear policy making it mandatory for government teachers to admit their own children in government schools. This will restore trust in the system and encourage others to follow suit. Otherwise, mere enrollment drives will remain ineffective.

3. Imbalance in Teacher Deployment

Some schools lack teachers, while others have an excess, leading to staffing imbalances. The teacher-student ratio should be strictly adhered to. The comfort zone policy, mostly adopted by female teachers, is detrimental to the education sector.

Updated official figures reveal that 119 schools in J&K function with no student enrollment. According to records, at least 238 teachers were posted in schools where no students were enrolled. This imbalance must be addressed

immediately.

4. Merit-Based Promotions in Education

There should be a departmental examination for promotion in the education sector. Advanced education systems worldwide follow a merit-based promotion system. However, in J&K, most heads of institutions at the primary, middle, and secondary levels are appointed based on seniority rather than competency. They are not assessed for leadership qualities, teaching pedagogy, inclusive education, or holistic development.

How can we expect schools to flourish under incompetent leadership? If an unqualified individual is at the helm of a school, progress is unlikely. Promotions should be earned through assessment, not just seniority.

5. Reforming the Role of Resource Persons (RPs)

The J&K School Education Department (SED) has introduced many progressive policies, one of which was the introduction of Resource Persons (RPs) in education. However, the selection process for RPs at zonal, district, and

state levels remains questionable.

National surveys like ASER 2024 depict a grim picture of student learning outcomes in J&K's government schools. RPs are primarily responsible for failing to bridge learning gaps. They fail to provide on-the-spot assistance to teachers.

RPs should be selected by national-level educationists for a specific period, as per government policy.

Making NEP 2020 a Success in J&K

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is still in its infancy. All stakeholders associated with the School Education Department (SED) must come forward with sincere and consistent efforts. The reforms mentioned above are critical to making NEP 2020 a success in J&K.

These comprehensive efforts will help bring government schools on par with private institutions. The poorest children, who cannot afford private schools with exorbitant fees, will benefit the most.

The writer is a teacher at Boys Secondary School, Narabal

I Keep My Promise

SIDHARTH P K

I keep my promise,
My sister
To continue the journey
As the night falls
Down to earth,
I keep my gaze
Upon the star.
I keep my promise,
My sister
To sing the muse
O'er the sun chill
Love and other man-
ners,
In the twist
Of the evening.
I keep my promise,
My sister
We shall meet again
In the point
Where the song meets,
And music grows
For us.

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In a fast-evolving world marked by changing career landscapes, technological advancements, and increasing socio-emotional complexities, the need for robust Career Guidance and Counselling (CGC) in schools has never been more urgent. Particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir, where lack of access to diverse career information, and limited mentorship contribute to students' career anxiety, a well-structured CGC framework can serve as a transformative tool.

As a Resource Person for Career Guidance and Counselling, I have witnessed firsthand

how students in Classes 10 and 12, standing at crucial crossroads, grapple with confusion, pressure, and misinformation. This article lays out a comprehensive framework aimed at empowering these students through informed choices, psychological support, and long-term visioning.

Why Career Guidance and Counselling?

Decision-making at Crossroads: Class 10 and 12 students are required to make critical academic and vocational choices with long-term implications. Psychological Well-being: In the absence of guidance, students experience high levels of stress, low self-esteem, and fear

of failure.

Changing Employment Landscape: Students need updated exposure to emerging careers.

Local Challenges: Rural students often lack mentors, digital access, and exposure.

Core Objectives of a Career Guidance and Counselling Program

To provide accurate and updated career information.

To assess aptitude, interests, values, and personality.

To address emotional and motivational blocks.

To enhance decision-making and planning skills.

To expose students to emerging fields, scholarships, and opportunities.

To involve parents and teachers as facilitators of the student's journey.

The Framework: A Step-by-Step Model

1. Pre-Session Planning: Conduct surveys, prepare resources.

2. Student Group Segmentation: Based on class, aspirations, motivation.

3. Career Awareness Module: Explain career journeys, introduce stream-subject-career linkage.

4. Psychometric Support & Self-Discovery Tools: Use tools to assess aptitude, personality, interests.

5. One-on-One Counselling & Group Guidance: Clarify myths,

discuss alternatives.

6. Parental and Teacher Involvement: Conduct awareness sessions, train teachers.

7. Use of Technology & Resources: Introduce portals, provide printed/digital guides.

Post-Session Follow-Up and Mentorship

Develop Career Tracker Files.

Provide mentorship and alumni networks.

Collaborate with NGOs and colleges.

Set up a school-level Career Cell.

Challenges and Cultural Sensitivities

Stigma around failure or

vocational courses.

Limited options for girls.

Over-focus on government jobs.

Fear of stepping outside the valley.

Conclusion: Building a Culture of Informed Hope

Career Guidance is not just about selecting a stream or profession, it is about building informed hope.

We must recognize the unique struggles of Kashmiri youth and walk with them as co-dreamers.

A strong CGC framework is the foundation for an empowered, skilled, and emotionally resilient generation.



Nasha Mukht J&K: IEC Campaign against Drug Abuse kicks off in Ganderbal

■ HT News Network

GANDERBAL, APRIL 04: District Administration Ganderbal today launched the Information Education and Communication campaign against drug abuse under Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir, with a mega awareness event held at the Auditorium Hall of Boys Higher Secondary School (BHSS), Ganderbal.

The event was presided over by the Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, as the chief guest. Among other dignitaries present were Additional Deputy Commissioner, Syed Faheem Bihaqi, District Social Welfare Officer, Deputy CEO, and a large gathering of

locals and students. The objective of the program was to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse and promote healthy living, and engage youth in community building. Speaking on the occasion, the DC highlighted the grave threat posed by drug abuse, particularly to the youth and their families. Highlighting the ill effects of drug abuse, the DC said that the drugs destroy lives and once someone falls into the trap, it becomes very difficult to come out. He emphasized that the campaign isn't just about warnings or statistics, it's about building a compassionate society that



treats addiction as a health crisis rather than a moral failure. Emphasizing the importance of empathy and support, he said that we must change our

mindset towards addicts and need to stand beside those who are suffering and help them rehabilitate. He maintained that the district administration is committed

to making Ganderbal drug-free and our collective efforts should ensure this message reaches every nook and corner of the district. The ADC, while addressing the

gathering, pointed out that students, especially those in vulnerable age groups are most at risk. He called for collective vigilance, urging parents and teachers to recognize the subtle signs and take preventive steps before it's too late. The ADC implored students to act as ambassadors of the campaign and appealed to them to become our mouthpieces and share this awareness with your families and friends. Resource persons from Education, Social Welfare and Health at the event also delivered informative sessions, educating the audience about the ill effects of drug abuse and sharing practical preventive measures.

The He maintained that the district administration is committed to making Ganderbal drug-free and our collective efforts should ensure this message reaches every nook and corner of the district. The ADC, while addressing the gathering, pointed out that students, especially those in vulnerable age groups are most at risk. He called for collective vigilance, urging parents and teachers to recognize the subtle signs and take preventive steps before it's too late. The ADC implored students to act as ambassadors of the campaign and appealed to them to become our mouthpieces and share this awareness with your families and friends.

District admin Baramulla bids farewell to outgoing ADC, welcomes new officers

■ HT News Network

Baramulla, April 04: The District Administration Baramulla organized a farewell function at Dak Bungalow Baramulla to honor the outgoing Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Dr. Zahoor Ahmad Raina and to welcome the newly appointed ADC, Syed Altaf Hussain Musvi, and Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Gulmarg, Mir Jalil Ahmed. Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, presided over the event and lauded the service of Dr. Zahoor Ahmad Raina, acknowledging his dedication, efficiency, and commitment to public welfare. He highlighted Dr. Raina's instrumental role in ensuring smooth governance, timely execution of development projects, and



effective public grievance redressal. The DC also praised Dr. Raina's contribution to revenue administration, particularly in land acquisition cases, dispute resolution, and strengthening revenue records. Additionally, his efforts in overseeing elec-

tion-related duties, ensuring smooth conduct of polling, and maintaining coordination with various departments were appreciated. The DC expressed gratitude for Dr. Raina's contributions and wished him success in his future endeavors.

Speaking on the occasion, ADC Sopore S.A. Raina, newly appointed ADC Syed Altaf Hussain Musvi, Joint Director Planning Javed Ahmad, and Assistant Commissioner Revenue Arshad Ahmad Khan, Dy SP HQ Baramulla, Altaf Ahmad Khan also lauded the dedicated services of Dr. Zahoor Ahmad Raina. They commended his professional acumen, administrative approach, highlighting his pivotal role in addressing public grievances, handling revenue matters efficiently, and ensuring seamless coordination between departments. As a mark of appreciation, mementos were presented to both the outgoing and incoming officers by the district officers and officials.

Bandipora admin holds training prog for coordinators for IEC campaign against drug abuse

■ HT News Network

Bandipora, April 04: The District Administration Bandipora on Friday organized a training programme for coordinators designated for the IEC Campaign against drug abuse.

The programme, presided over by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Bandipora, Zaffar Husson Shawl, was aimed at equipping coordinators with the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively implement the campaign at the grassroots level.

Speaking on the occasion, ADC emphasized the significance of the IEC campaign in curbing drug menace and its adverse effects on society. He urged all stakeholders to work with dedication and enthusiasm to ensure the campaign's success in a mission mode.

ADC Zaffar Husson Shawl called for collective efforts to safeguard the youth and the community from the ill effects of drugs and stressed the importance of early intervention and prevention strategies to ensure a drug-free society.



He also stressed the importance of using a strategic communication approach to reach vulnerable sections of society.

District Information Officer (DIO), Aadil Manzoor Wani, who is also District Level Coordinator for the IEC Campaign, elaborated on the vital role of coordinators in executing awareness initiatives.

He highlighted the activities planned under the campaign, stressing the importance of community participation and outreach in spreading awareness.

He urged coordinators to actively

involve youth at panchayat level to amplify the message against drug abuse.

On the occasion, resource person from the National Informatics Centre (NIC) Sheikh Aubaid ur Rehman briefed the participants on the use of an Android application specifically designed for uploading and monitoring IEC campaign activities, ensuring seamless reporting and transparency.

Among others the training programme was attended by designated coordinators from various departments and other concerned.

SHEW Shopian holds awareness camp at Mugmarg Zainapora

■ HT News Network

Shopian, April 04: Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, (SHEW) Shopian today organized an awareness programme at AWC Mugmarg, Zainapora Shopian. The event was aimed at educating women about various welfare schemes, helpline numbers and other initiatives of women upliftment available in the district. Officials provided detailed insights into a range of welfare initiatives, including those focused on women's education, skill development, financial independence, health, and entrepreneurship. Speaking at the event, officials from Sankalp Hub emphasized the importance of empowering women with knowledge and resources. Participants were also encouraged to engage with ongoing skill development programmes and entrepreneurial ventures supported by various departments in the district.

IIM Field Station Bonera sets to Indigenize Tulips: Scientists aim at Import Substitution, Viksit Farmers

■ HT News Network

New Delhi April 04 The scenic beauty of Kashmir's tulip gardens has long been a major attraction for tourists, with vibrant displays at Srinagar drawing visitors each year. In a significant step toward promoting sustainable floriculture and enhancing farmers' income, CSIR Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIM), Jammu a premier research and development institution of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) under the Union Ministry of Science and Technology, mandated with pre-clinical drug discovery, has also been implementing various societal Mission programmes like CSIR's Aroma and Floriculture Mission. Under the CSIR Floriculture Mission, the key verticals include Generation of Quality Planting Material of High Value Floricultural Crops, Area Expansion under Floriculture, Urban Floriculture, Post-Harvest Processing and Value Addition, Integration of Floriculture with Apiculture, Establishing Marketing Linkages, and Domestication of Wild Ornamentals. Further, through the Mission activities, the institute has been dedicated to supporting farmers through research and development, particularly in high value floricultural crop cultivation. In conformity with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, Prime Minister's clarion call for self-reliant India, the pan India CSIR Societal Mission programmes envisioned by Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology (Independent Charge) achieved remarkable achievements since last few years.

NIT Srinagar's new campus in Pulwama: NGT issues notice to Govt, NIT Director

■ HT News Network

Srinagar April 4: As the Government is planning to set up a new campus of National Institute of Technology-NIT Srinagar at Newa area of Pulwama the National Green Tribunal-NGT has issued notice to J&K Government and Director NIT Srinagar asking them to submit a detailed response. The petition has been moved by RTI & Environmental Activist Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat before the NGT through his counsel Advocate Saurabh Sharma. The petitioner has sought intervention of NGT to prevent the axing of thousands

of fruit and non-fruit bearing trees in the 4500 kanals of Karewa land which belongs to around 7 villages of Newa and its adjoining areas.

The petitioner in his original application has said that this entire area is a habitat for summer migratory birds like European bee-eater, Kashmir flycatcher, White-capped bunting (Emberiza stewarti), Common Cuckoo, Jacobin Cuckoo and Himalayan Red Fox, porcupines and leopards. The case was listed before the Principal Bench of National Green Tribunal-NGT on Tuesday April 1st 2025. The bench issued notices to Chief Secretary J&K, Director NIT Srinagar,

Chairman J&K Biodiversity Council, Chief Wildlife Warden and Deputy Commissioner Pulwama. The bench of Justice Prakash Srivastava (NGT Chairperson), Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi (Judicial Member) and Dr Satyagopal Korlapati (Expert Member) in its order directed the Director NIT Srinagar campus to disclose the entire plan of construction of NIT campus and number of trees to be cut down. "Issue notice on OA and IA to the respondents for filing their response/reply by way of affidavit before the Tribunal at least one week before the next date of hearing through e-filing. If any respondent directly.

DC directs maintenance, beautification of Shopian Public Park

■ HT News Network

Shopian, April 04: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta today visited a recreational Park at Shopian town to review the available facilities, assess its maintenance besides review security and sanitation measures.

The visit aimed to take stock of the management of park in order to promote its recreational purpose for the residents of the district.

During the visit, DC inspected various attractions and directed concerned authorities of Revenue, Police, MC Shopian and Floriculture departments for argumentation of amenities & beautification of park. He also directed them for installation of CCTVs and street lights



around the park.

DC emphasized the need for developing the recreational area to boost its leisure options for residents especially children.

ADDC, Dr Nasir Ahmad Lone; ADC, Dr Zakir Hussain Faaz, ACR, Shakoor Ahmad Dar, ASP, Showkat Wani, District Floriculture Officer and other district officers were accompanying him.

ICSI Empowers Governance Leadership through its 3rd Board Mentorship Programme in Srinagar

■ Ishfaq Aziz

Srinagar, 4 April 2025: The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI), under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, marked a significant stride in corporate governance by organising its 3rd Board Mentorship Programme through the Institute of Governance Professionals of India (IGPI), a Section 8 company promoted by ICSI. The four-day Director's Training Programme, held from 2-5 April 2025 in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, focused on enhancing board-level leadership, equipping decision-makers with the skills to foster empowered teams and collaborative growth environments. CS Dhananjay Shukla, President The ICSI, stated, "The 3rd Board Mentorship Programme in Jammu & Kashmir reaffirms our commitment to nurturing visionary leaders who can uphold and elevate the standards of governance. Through focused training and collaborative dialogue, we aim to build boardrooms that



are not only strategic but also inclusive and forward-thinking." Continuing its mission of global professional empowerment, the ICSI set up Overseas Centres in Australia, Canada, Singapore, UAE, UK and USA. To further strengthen its global presence, the ICSI is hosting its Middle East Conference 2025 on 24-26 April, in Dubai, on the theme - Good Governance: Empowering Capital Markets, and its 4th International

Conference in Sydney on 3-5 September 2025, on the theme - Embracing Innovation, Enhancing Good Governance. Digitally, the ICSI continues its transformation through e-learning modules, UDIN and eCSin, reinforcing compliance, transparency, and accessibility. Recognitions from SEBI and IFSCA have further elevated the role of Company Secretaries in securities and capital markets.

Further, the ICSI has initiated various Post Membership Qualification (PMQ) Certificate Courses to enhance the acumen and skill set of its members. It has set up the ICSI International ADR Centre and started the Start-up & MSME Catalyst initiative to expand members' professional impact. The ICSI has also recently developed the PoSH Governance Standards and Social Audit Standards. The ICSI has initiated direct registration into the CS Executive Programme for graduates and for its students, the ICSI has started free online classes, Debating Society, one-year CSMC residential programme etc.

The ICSI has inked MoUs for academic collaborations with various IIMs, NLUs, and Olympiad foundations. With fee waivers for students from Jammu & Kashmir, armed forces families, and concessions for economically weaker and special category students, the ICSI reaffirms the fact that amidst all the other initiatives, social responsibility remains at its core.



Truck loaded with firewood seized at Kathua

■ HT News Network

KATHUA, APRIL 04: In a continuous drive against the illegal smuggling of firewood from the border area, a joint team of Forest Protection Force Gammama Unit J-3, Kathua and Forest Territorial staff of Kathua Forest Division seized a truck bearing Reg. No JK-01AS/7167 while trying to smuggle firewood outside UT. A case has been registered under the provisions of Indian Forest Act and further investigation is on.

DC Poonch joins devotees at special Navratri prayer at Kalika Temple

■ HT News Network



POONCH, APRIL 04: Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal today attended a special Navratri congregation at revered Kalika Devi Temple here in Main Bazar Poonch. During his visit, the DC participated in the evening Maha Arti, joining local devotees in the vibrant celebration of faith and cultural heritage. His presence underscored the importance of spiritual observances in fostering unity and enhancing cultural pride among the residents of Poonch. The Temple management committee welcomed Deputy Commissioner Kundal, expressing their gratitude for his attendance at this significant event. Joining the gathering of devotees, he offered prayers for peace and prosperity in the region.

Farewell accorded to outgoing ACR at Doda

■ HT News Network



DODA, APRIL 04: The District Administration Doda today bid a warm farewell to Assistant Commissioner Revenue Sunil Bhutyal on his transfer and promotion as Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Bhaderwah. Bidding him farewell, officers and staff gathered to convey their best wishes, expressing confidence that he will continue to serve with the same passion and integrity in his new role. His promotion is seen as a well-deserved recognition of his competence and unwavering dedication to public service.

Certainly, here's a heartfelt tribute story for the late Ghulam Ahmed Naik on his 11th death anniversary

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, APRIL 04: Remembering Ghulam Ahmed Naik: A Legacy Etched in Love and Grace Today, as we mark the 11th death anniversary of Ghulam Ahmed Naik—a noble soul, a guiding light, and the proud father of renowned trader Bashir Ahmed Naik of Zagigam, Pulwama—we bow our heads in reverence and gratitude. Ghulam Ahmed Naik was not just a man of strong character and unshakable faith, but a true embodiment of humility, kindness, and wisdom. In the quiet lanes of Zagigam, his presence still lingers—in the stories shared by elders, in the respect echoed by neighbors, and in the values he passed on to his family. A man of simplicity yet immense strength, his life was a living sermon of patience and integrity. Those who knew him speak of his generous heart, always ready to lend a hand or offer words of warmth and wisdom. He lived not for himself, but for others—his family, his community, and his Creator. His son, Bashir Ahmed Naik, stands today as a reflection of his father's teachings—carrying forward the same honesty, respect for tradition, and commitment to excellence that Ghulam Ahmed Naik instilled in him. A tree is known by its fruit, and the fruits of Ghulam Ahmed's life continue to grow and flourish in the deeds and lives of his children and grandchildren. On this solemn day, we remember him not with sorrow alone, but with immense pride and love. His absence is deeply felt, but his legacy lives on—in every prayer, in every kind word, and in every honest act done in his memory. May Allah (SWT) grant him the highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous and continue to shower blessings upon his family. Ameen. Forever in our hearts, always in our duas.

DDC Chairman, MLA Udhampur East kick start blacktopping work of 6 Km NH to Mahamaya Mandir road

■ HT News Network

UDHAMPUR, APRIL 04: Chairman District Development Council Udhampur Lal Chand today kick-started the black-topping work on the 6 km National Highway to Mahamaya Mandir road being constructed at a cost of Rs 7.38 cr. The foundation stone of the road was laid in March 2024. MLA Udhampur East, Ranbir Singh Pathania, DDC Udhampur-I Puran Chand and DDC Tikri Ashu Sharma, along with the officials from the PWD department, including AEE and JE were also present at the launch of the work.

This is the first road project among 13 projects on which the black topping work is being initiated. The project was prioritised by the District Development Council under NABARD in the FY 2023-24. Another project under the same sanction—the Bridge over Dhandyal Nallah at the Krimachi Debrah road has already been completed and opened for the commuters. The blacktopping of the road from the



National Highway to Mahamaya Mandir represents a significant infrastructure development. This project is prioritised by the District Development Council (DDC) as it holds cultural and tourism value by enhancing connectivity to religious sites

like the Mahamaya Mandir. The completion of the Dhandyal Nallah Bridge on the Krimachi Debrah road, another project under the same sanction, demonstrates progress in addressing critical infrastructure needs.

The projects contribute to the overall development of the region by improving connectivity, facilitating economic activity, and enhancing access to essential services. The improved road infrastructure will significantly benefit pilgrims visiting the Mahamaya Mandir, enhancing their travel experience.

The Chairman congratulated the locals of the area for the developmental initiatives and urged the officials concerned to maintain the quality of the work. The locals also thanked the chairman for conceding their long-pending demand. This is the first road project among 13 projects on which the black topping work is being initiated. The project was prioritised by the District Development Council under NABARD in the FY 2023-24. Another project under the same sanction—the Bridge over Dhandyal Nallah at the Krimachi Debrah road has already been completed and opened for the commuters.

The blacktopping of the road from the National Highway to Mahamaya Mandir represents a significant infrastructure.

Nasha Mukti Jammu Kashmir Abhiyan Doda admin gears up for Anti-Drug IEC Campaign

■ HT News Network

DODA, APRIL 04: Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh today chaired a meeting to review the preparedness for the launch of district-wide Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign on April 7, 2025 under the Nasha Mukti Jammu Kashmir Abhiyan.

The campaign, aimed at combating drug abuse, will initially start in 17 panchayats, and cover all 237 panchayats and educational institutions in the district during the current year. The meeting was attended by DPO S-Parmjeet Singh, ASP Headquarters Shakeel Ahmed Bhatt, ACD Manoj Kumar and officers from other stakeholder departments.

The campaign will be supervised by the designated Nodal Officer and will focus on community awareness, youth engagement, and sensitization programs. It will involve the participation of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), students, ASHA workers and civil



society members. Awareness rallies, camps, cultural events, and interactive sessions will be organized to inform the public about the harmful effects of drug addiction and encourage them to opt for a healthy lifestyle. Campaign badges were also launched after the meeting to promote community

involvement.

The DC urged all stakeholders to work in coordination to ensure the success of the campaign. He emphasized the need for maximum participation, especially in rural and vulnerable areas, to make Doda a drug-free and aware district.

Yasin Malik Tells SC He Is a Political Leader, Not a Terrorist

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 4: Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chief Yasin Malik, currently serving a life sentence, told the Supreme Court on Friday that he is a political leader, not a terrorist, and claimed that seven Indian Prime Ministers had engaged in talks with him in the past.

Appearing via video conference before a bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan, Malik responded to Solicitor General Tushar Mehta's remarks about his alleged links with militant groups. He argued that his organization has never been designated as a terrorist outfit under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and pointed out that he was granted bail in multiple cases after declaring a unilateral ceasefire in 1994. Malik stated that successive Prime Ministers, from PV Narasimha Rao to Narendra Modi's first tenure, upheld the ceasefire understanding. However, he questioned why the current government had revived decades-old militancy-related cases against him, calling it a breach of the ceasefire arrangement.

Solicitor General Mehta countered that the ceasefire was irrelevant to the legal proceedings.

DC Shopian directs immediate reparation of Narwah Road

■ HT News Network

Shopian, April 4: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta today assessed the condition of damaged segment of road at Narwah & directed concerned agencies for immediate reparations.

While visiting the site, DC took stock of the identified stretches that require immediate reparation work to facilitate the smooth movement of transportation. Emphasizing the importance of road connectivity for local commuters, DC directed the concerned departments, including R&B Department and PMGSY to coordinate with PC Division looking after the NH 444 and expedite execution of necessary repair and maintenance works.

He also interacted with locals, who projected their grievances & demands regard-



ing different issues.

While assuring prompt redressal, DC reiterated the administration's commitment to infrastructure development and responsive governance.

ADC, Dr Zakir Hussain Faaz, officers and other officials accompanied DC during the inspection.

Over 10 Kanals Of Land Attached Under UAPA In J&K's Ramban

■ HT News Network

Jammu, Apr 4: Jammu and Kashmir Police on Friday attached agricultural land measuring 10.18 kanals in Ramban district under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, an official said, Jammu travel guide

The attached properties, registered in the name of Mohd Sharief of Dalwah-Gool and Mohd Younis of Hara-Gool, are linked to an FIR filed last year, he said.

Earlier in February, police had attached 23.13 kanals of land belonging to five Hizbul Mujahideen operatives — Saraj Din (48) of Sangaldan, Reyaz Ahmed (45) of Dalwah, Farooq Ahmed (46) of Banj Bhimdassa, and Mohd Ashraf (50) and Mushtaq Ahmed (47) of Moila — in connection with the same case.

All of them are said to have crossed over to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) a few decades ago and have been operating from

there. They were allegedly trying to sell the properties to fund terror activities, police said.

Terming the latest attachment of properties as a "significant move" in combating terrorism, the official said that 7.03 kanals of land belonged to Sharief at Dalwah village, while 3.15 kanals were in the name of Younis at Kalimasta Mohra Hara.

"The attached properties have been recorded in revenue records, and notices were served prohibiting their sale or transfer. The attachment was processed in the presence of an executive magistrate, ensuring full compliance with legal procedures," the official said. He said police, in collaboration with other agencies, remain resolute in their mission to take a stringent measures against individuals and entities involved in activities threatening the sovereignty and integrity of the nation.

Rajouri admin mulls to take up tourism, other projects on PublicPrivate Partnership mode

■ HT News Network

RAJOURI, APRIL 04: Additional District Development Commissioner, Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa today convened a meeting to discuss the projects proposed to be undertaken under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode. The meeting, held in the office chamber of the ADDC, focused on exploring the feasibility of the developmental projects aimed at enhancing tourism, infrastructure, and public amenities in the district.

Dr. Thapa emphasized the urgent need for a comprehensive pre-feasibility study for each proposed project to assess their viability under the PPP model.

The projects discussed during the meeting included Ropeway from Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah Shrine at Shahdara to Seeri, Ropeway from Shakar Marg Darhal to Seven Lakes, Construction of a Modern Tourist Reception Centre (TRC) with Cafeteria, Parking, Public Convenience Services (PCS), Shopping Complex at Shahdara Sharief, Construction of a Modern TRC with similar facilities at



Tatapani Barmandal, Development of a Modern Park at Alpha Gate Phalyana & construction of a Cinema Hall and Multi-Storey Car Parking Facility in Rajouri Town

Dr. Thapa directed the concerned departments to submit detailed feasibility reports for each project, clearly outlining the potential benefits and sustainability of implementing them under the PPP framework. The ADDC reiterated the administration's commitment to exploring innovative solutions for infrastructure development, with a focus on public-private collaboration to boost tourism and economic growth in the district.

The meeting was attended by GMDIC, Fareed Ahmed Kohli; Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Sheraz Chouhan; Chief Planning Officer, Maqsood Ahmed; Assistant Commissioner Development, Vijay Kumar Verma; Executive Engineer, Sardar Khan; Executive Officer Municipality, Yousaf ul Umar; and Tourist Officer, Mumtaz Ahmed.



Shrine Board's Medical College unveils Skill and Simulation Lab for immersive learning

HT News Network

Kakryal, April 4: Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME) - Medical College of SMVDSB achieved a significant milestone with the unveiling of its state-of-the-art Skill and Simulation Lab. This cutting-edge facility is equipped with the latest technology and equipment, providing a comprehensive platform for enhancing hands-on medical training and skill development. The lab will benefit faculty members, MBBS and nursing students, as well as paramedical staff by offering immersive training experiences that foster expertise and excellence in patient care.

Anshul Garg, Chief Executive Officer, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board inaugurated the Skill and Simulation Lab in the presence of Alok Kumar Maurya, Additional Chief Executive Officer; Dr. Gopal Sharma, Asstt. Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB; Dr. Yashpal Sharma, Executive Director, SMVDIME, Associated Hospital



and Principals from GMC Kathua and GMC Doda along with other SMVDIME officers and staff.

Following the inauguration, a guided tour of the lab revealed its state-of-the-art, high-fidelity training equipment which leverages cutting-edge technology to replicate real-world medical scenarios. On the occasion, CEO, SMVDSB expressed his gratitude to the Hon'ble Chairman, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (Lt.

Governor, JK-UT) for his unwavering support and guidance in approving the infrastructural plan for the Medical College. This ambitious plan, at the cost of Rs.350 crore, encompasses the development of a state-of-the-art Academic and Administrative Block for SMVDIME, accommodations for faculty and students and the expansion of the existing Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Narayana Superspeciality Hospital by adding around 250

beds. The ultimate aim is to increase the Medical College's intake capacity from 50 to 100 seats, aligning with the Shrine Board's decision.

The CEO commended the Executive Director and his team for their exceptional work in establishing the facility while highlighting the significance of simulation-based learning in medical education. He underscored that this cutting-edge facility will transform skill training, providing students with hands-on experience in a controlled and safe environment, besides, bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Furthermore, the CEO asserted that the facility will also train all Shrine Board employees in Basic Life Support (BLS) ensuring that pilgrims visiting the Holy Shrine receive optimal care.

Dr. Yashpal Sharma, Executive Director, SMVDIME expressed his gratitude to all stakeholders who contributed to the successful realization of this project while stating that this state-of-the-art facility embodies SMVDIME's unwavering com-

Five JK startups showcase innovation at Startup Mahakumbh 2.0

HT News Network



JAMMU, APRIL 04: Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) marked a significant presence at Startup Mahakumbh 2.0, India's largest startup platform by showcasing five promising startups from J&K.

These startups demonstrated the innovative solutions, thereby taking the Startups from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to the national stage. The five startups representing Jammu & Kashmir at the event are CLMRAT India Pvt. Ltd., GR8 Sports Pvt. Ltd. Studio Agama, BISA Pvt Ltd, and Al-Hamdaan Crafts Pvt Ltd.

This participation facilitated by JKEDI under J&K Startup Policy 2024-27, highlights the growing startup ecosystem in Jammu & Kashmir and the government's commitment to fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth. The platform provided these startups with an opportunity to network with investors, industry leaders, and other ecosystem enablers, helping them scale their ventures to new heights. Speaking about the participation, Secretary Industries & Commerce Department with additional charge of Director JKEDI, Khalid Jahangir emphasized that the presence of J&K-based startups at Startup Mahakumbh 2.0 underscored the commitment of JKEDI in nurturing the entrepreneurial talent and creating an enabling ecosystem. "We are proud of our startups for showcasing their innovations at this prestigious platform," he said. Startup Mahakumbh 2.0, known as the largest confluence of startups, investors, and policymakers in India, serves as a catalyst for emerging businesses by providing them with visibility, networking opportunities.

'Katcha Houses to become a Relic of past': VC DDC Udhampur hails transformative impact of PMAY

HT News Network

UDHAMPUR, APRIL 04: Vice Chairperson District Development Council Juhi Manhas Pathania today hailed highly transformative impact of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) scheme in ameliorating the socio-economic condition of poor, saying Katcha Houses will soon become a relic of past.

While touring the length and breadth of District Udhampur, Juhi emphasized that the Union Government is working on a mission mode to ensure that no one lives in a kutchha house.

Juhi called upon Rural Development staff and ground-level workers to maximize geotagging of houses in their respective areas. She also urged officials to ensure a hassle-free geotagging process for beneficiaries. She reaffirmed that PMAY remains a top priority of the Centre, highlighting its role in transforming rural housing.

Additionally, she raised aware-



ness about the PM Surya Ghar Bijli Yojana, a revolutionary scheme aimed at providing clean, renewable, and affordable electricity to households. "Under this initiative, households will be equipped with solar rooftop panels, enabling them to generate their own electricity and reduce dependence on conventional energy sources," she said and informed "The government is offering subsidized rates and financial assistance to encourage the adoption of solar energy. This

scheme will not only help in reducing electricity bills but also contribute to environmental sustainability by promoting the use of green energy."

Juhi urged citizens to take advantage of this opportunity and adopt solar power for a brighter and cleaner future.

Various deputations met her during the visit, highlighting requirement of staff at Government Higher Secondary School Thial, Government Higher Secondary School Mansar, Hanging

School at Garh Samna Bhanj, GHSS Barta, GHSS Baryalta and GHSS Nakki.

Juhi assured the deputation led by local PRIs from Chor Panjian and Mottu that High School Mottu has been enlisted under a PM SHRI Scheme, marking a significant achievement for the region. Interacting with another delegation from Latti, she stressed the need for macadamization of roads and the commencement of work on the Kirchi to Seoj Dhar road—a flagship central project. Juhi called upon Rural Development staff and ground-level workers to maximize geotagging of houses in their respective areas. She also urged officials to ensure a hassle-free geotagging process for beneficiaries. She reaffirmed that PMAY remains a top priority of the Centre, highlighting its role in transforming rural housing.

Additionally, she raised awareness about the PM Surya Ghar Bijli Yojana, a revolutionary scheme aimed at providing clean, renewable.

DC reviews functioning of Revenue Department in Poonch

HT News Network

POONCH, APRIL 04: Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal today chaired a meeting to review the functioning of the Revenue Department in the district. The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Tahir Mustafa Malik; Sub-Divisional Magistrate Mendhar Imran Kataria; SDM Surankote Farooq Khan, along with Tehsildars, the Account Officer, and other concerned officials. The meeting discussed the ongoing endeavors in digitizing and geo-referencing of revenue records. The urgency of completing the digitization process, and retrieval of encroached state land were emphasized throughout the discussions. The current sanction Strength and Vacancy Positions, essential revenue documents such as Khewats, Khatas, and Khasras were also discussed. The Deputy Commissioner specifically highlighted the need for timely verification and digitization of revenue records,



directing all officials to ensure the provision of online services to the public within a stipulated time frame. He also mandated the demolition of illegal encroachments along NH144, reinforcing the government's commitment to maintaining public land integrity. Additionally, the meeting reviewed the Capex Budget for 2024-25, focusing on the status of construction projects and the completion of the remaining land passbook issuance process. This proactive approach aims to bolster the efficiency of the Revenue Department and enhance service delivery to the citizens of Poonch.

Poonch: RTA approves 79 MUMKIN Scheme cases, sanctions 9 Minibus permits

HT News Network

POONCH, APRIL 04: Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal on Friday convened a meeting of the Regional Transport Authority (RTA) at his Office Chamber to discuss and strategize seamless public transport services in the district.

The meeting addressed different aspects of public transport, with an emphasis on reviewing applications for road permits. The meeting assessed and approved 79 MUMKIN Scheme cases, paving the way for applicants to own small commercial vehicles at subsidized price. Additionally, the meeting sanctioned 9 mini bus permits. However, it rejected all 9 applications for auto rickshaw permits, with a directive to promote the use of e-rickshaws. The Deputy Commissioner highlighted the necessity of conducting feasibility studies for the operation of mini buses on the newly approved routes, instructing the relevant authorities to collaborate with the District Transport Inspector (DTI) to prepare comprehensive reports.

To address traffic congestion in the city, the DC, in his capacity as Chairman of the RTA, assured the provision of parking space for Tata Magic vehicles. He also urged the concerned officers to ensure proper traffic regulation and take necessary actions against violators, reaffirming the commitment to maintaining order on the roads. In a compassionate gesture, DC Vikas Kundal presented a cheque of Rs 1 lakh to road accident victim Parambir Singh, providing immediate support to his family.

'Say No to Drugs': DIPR artists spread message through Cultural Programme

HT News Network

JAMMU, APRIL 04: A Cultural Awareness Programme on "Nasha Mukht Bharat" (Say No to Drugs) was today organised by the Cultural Unit, Department of Information & Public Relations (DIPR) Jammu here at JDA Club Roopnagar. The event, hosted in collaboration with District Administration Jammu, aimed to spread awareness about the detrimental effects of drug abuse and encourage a drug-free society.

Artists of the Cultural Unit raise awareness through theme-based songs. The performers skillfully highlighted how drug addiction impacts individuals, families, and society at large.

SDPO Bakshi Nagar Satish Bhardwaj and Tehsildar Jammu North Aman Kumar Anand shared their views and also made the audience aware of the topic. They appreciated the efforts of the Department of Information and Public Relations for organising the event to generate awareness for the audience.

The whole programme was conducted under the directions of Joint Director Information Jammu Atul Gupta and supervision of Cultural Office, Mukesh Kumar Sharma.

GGM Science College hosts Inspiring Expert Talk on 'Motivation through Goal Setting'

HT News Network

JAMMU, APRIL 04: GGM Science College on Friday organized an insightful expert talk on "Motivation Through Goal Setting," aimed at inspiring students to adopt a structured approach towards success. The event was spearheaded by the College Committee for Debates, Seminars, and Symposiums in association with the NSS wing. Prof. (Dr.) Romesh Kumar Gupta, Principal of the College hailed the Committee's endeavor.

The keynote speaker for the session was Regional Provident Fund Commissioner Jammu and Kashmir and a distinguished motivational speaker Rizwan Uddin. He emphasized the transformative power of goal setting in both personal and professional growth, urging students to take the first step with confidence. "Uncertainty is certain, but it's our mindset that matters," he remarked, encouraging attendees to develop resilience and self-belief in the face of challenges.

Rizwan Uddin elaborated on the crucial role of clear objectives, self-discipline, and determination in achieving success. Through real-life examples and interactive discussions, he guided students in aligning their aspirations with practical, actionable steps. The session received an enthusiastic response, with attendees appreciating the motivational insights and tangible strategies provided.

DHSJ inspects functioning of SDH Bhaderwah

HT News Network

BHADERWAH, APRIL 04: Director Health Services Jammu (DHSJ), Dr. Abdul Hamid Zargar today inspected patient care services at Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Bhaderwah. The Director was accompanied by Chief Medical Officer Dr. Om Kumar and Block Medical Officer Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Kuchay. Dr. Zargar conducted a thorough inspection of different sections of the hospital, interacting with the medical and paramedical staff. The members of local NGOs and civil society members also met Dr. Zargar and congratulated him for his new assignment as DHS Jammu. They also projected several demands for the betterment of healthcare services in the region. They sought his intervention in strengthening the Medicare facilities, staff augmentation, and infrastructure development in SDH Bhaderwah and other peripheral health institutions. Responding to the projected demands, Dr. Zargar assured the public that all possible measures will be taken to enhance healthcare services in the region. He reiterated his commitment to strengthening infrastructure, ensuring the availability of medical personnel, and improving patient care services in SDH Bhaderwah and surrounding health centers. Later, the DHS took stock of the arrangements at the ongoing screening camp being conducted in the hospital ahead of the mega surgical camp being organized by Rotary International India from 16th April 2025 onwards. CMO along with BMO and hospital staff extended their warm regards to Dr. Zargar and provided a detailed briefing on the functioning and requirements of SDH Bhaderwah.

DC finalises arrangements for Ram Navmi celebration in Kishtwar

HT News Network

KISHTWAR, APRIL 04: Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Kumar Shavan convened a meeting with officers from the line departments to review and finalize the arrangements for the Ram Navmi festival. Representatives from the Sanatan Dharma Sabha shared valuable suggestions regarding key aspects of festival preparations. They

sought special provision for sanitation, electricity and water supply, traffic management and adequate availability of ration supplies. The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the critical importance of maintaining cleanliness and hygiene during the festivities. He directed the concerned departments to actively promote sanitation efforts including lime lining at festive venues, especially in and around temples. Additionally, the DC instructed officials to



visit temples to assess the ground situation and ensure readiness. The SSP was asked to make comprehensive security arrangements at temples across the district to ensure the safety of the devotees.

The meeting also underscored the need for seamless interdepartmental coordination to facilitate smooth festival celebrations.

The Jal Shakti and Power Development Department (PDD) was asked to take all necessary measures to provide seamless

services. The Executive Engineer PDD was tasked with ensuring proper lighting arrangements in addition to consistent power supply. Tehsildar Kishtwar was instructed to monitor the rates and quality of food items sold during the festival through regular market checks.

The Health Department was directed to make adequate provisions for medical facilities, including the deployment of medical staff, to handle any emergency situations.





BIMSTEC emerging as powerful platform, says PM Modi, proposes 21-point action plan at Bangkok Summit

AGENCIES

BANGKOK/NEW DELHI, APR 4 (UND)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that BIMSTEC is emerging as a powerful platform for advancing regional connectivity, cooperation and shared prosperity among the seven Bay of Bengal nations. He proposed a 21-point action plan at the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok, Thailand, today.

In his address, PM Modi also expressed happiness that the BIMSTEC Charter came into force last year. "I am confident that the Bangkok Vision 2030, which we are adopting today, will further our collective commitment to building a prosperous, secure, and inclusive Bay of Bengal region," the PM said.

The 21-point action plan includes:

- * Business
- * Establishment of BIMSTEC Chamber of Commerce.
- * Organization of BIMSTEC Business Summit



every year.

- * Feasibility study on the possibilities of trade in local currency in the BIMSTEC region.

IT

- * Pilot study to understand the needs of BIMSTEC countries to share the experience of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)
- * Connectivity between UPI and payment systems in the BIMSTEC region.

Mitigation and Disaster Management

- * Establishing the BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence for Disaster Management in India to cooperate in disaster management, relief and rehabilitation.

- * Fourth joint exercises between BIMSTEC Disas-

ter Management Authorities to be held in India this year.

- * Security
- * Holding the first meeting of the Home Ministers' Mechanism in India Space
- * Setting up ground stations for manpower training for BIMSTEC countries, manufacturing and launching of Nano Satellites, and use of remote sensing data.

Capacity Building and Training

- * "BODHI", i.e., "BIMSTEC for Organised Development of Human resource Infrastructure" initiative. Under this, 300 youth from BIMSTEC countries will be trained in

India every year.

- * Scholarships to BIMSTEC students in the Forestry Research Institute of India and expansion of the scholarship scheme at Nalanda University.

- * Training programme every year for young diplomats from BIMSTEC countries.

- * Tata Memorial Centre to support training and capacity building in cancer care in BIMSTEC countries.

- * Establishment of Centre of Excellence for research and dissemination in traditional medicine

- * Centre of Excellence in India for exchange of knowledge and best practices, research and capacity building for the benefit of farmers.

Energy

- * BIMSTEC Energy Centre in Bengaluru has started working.

- * Faster work on electric grid interconnection.

Youth engagement

- * BIMSTEC Young Leaders' Summit to be held this year.

- * The BIMSTEC Hackathon and Young Professional Visitors programme will be launched.

Sports

- * Holding 'BIMSTEC Athletics Meet' in India this year.

- * Hosting the first BIMSTEC Games in 2027

Culture

- * BIMSTEC Traditional Music Festival to be held in India this year

Connectivity

- * Establishment of Sustainable Maritime Transport Centre in India to work to enhance coordination in capacity building, research, innovation and maritime policies.

"For us, BIMSTEC is not merely a regional organization. It is a model for inclusive development and collective security. It stands as a testament to our shared commitments and the strength of our unity," PM Modi said

He also extended a warm welcome to Bangladesh as the incoming Chair of BIMSTEC and conveyed best wishes for its successful leadership.

Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025 will end "injustice and corruption": Shah

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, APR 4 (UND)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday described the passage of Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, by Parliament as "historic" and said that it will put an end to "injustice and corruption".

He said that through this bill, the "Waqf Board and the Waqf properties" will be more "accountable, transparent and equitable".

In a post on X, Shah said, "Today is a historic day, when the Parliament has approved the 'Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025', ending the era of years of injustice and corruption and ushering in an era of justice and equality."

"Through this bill, the Waqf Board and Waqf properties are going to be more accountable, transparent and equitable. This will definitely benefit the poor, women and children of the Muslim community," he added.

"I congratulate the Prime Minister Mr. @narendramodi and the Minister of Minority Affairs



Mr. @KirenRijju for this important bill that gives justice to crores of people. Also, I express my heartfelt gratitude to all the parties and MPs who supported it," he said.

Notably, the landmark and contentious Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2025 on Thursday received Parliament's approval, with the Rajya Sabha passing the legislation after a mara-

thon discussion, rejecting the amendments moved by the Opposition. While 128 members backed the bill, 95 voted against it when the legislation was put to vote past 2 am, technically on Friday.

The Lok Sabha had passed the Bill on Wednesday after an extensive debate which began at noon and went on till over 1 AM.

SC declines petition seeking ban on social media for children below 13

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, APR 4 (UND)

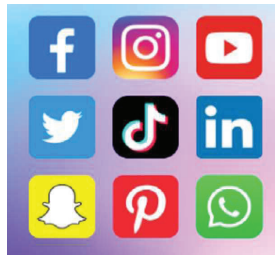
The Supreme Court on Friday declined to entertain a Writ Petition under Article 32 seeking immediate judicial intervention to regulate and restrict access to social media for children under 13 years of age.

The petition highlighted an unprecedented mental health crisis due to excessive digital exposure and urged the Court to enforce strict age verification mechanisms.

A bench comprising Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice A.G. Masih observed that the issue falls within the realm of policy-making and directed the petitioners to approach the government instead. "We are not inclined to entertain this petition," remarked Justice Gavai, emphasizing that such regulatory matters should be addressed by Parliament.

The petition was filed through Advocate-on-Record Mohini Priya. She argued that unrestricted social media access for young children violates their fundamental rights under Article 21, which includes the right to mental well-being, dignity, and healthy development.

The petitioners sought a complete ban on social media for children below 13, citing alarming sta-



tistics on rising depression, anxiety, self-harm, and suicide rates among minors due to algorithm-driven addiction. It also urged the Court to implement mandatory biometric-based age verification for social media platforms, Parental controls and real-time monitoring for children aged 13-18.

The Petitioner urged strict penalties for non-compliance by social media companies. There should be algorithmic safeguards to prevent targeting minors with addictive content.

During the hearing, the petitioners argued that the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP Act) contains inadequate parental supervision measures, which can be easily bypassed.

They pointed to international precedents in Australia, the UK, and US states like Florida, where governments have enacted laws to protect minors from social media addiction.

However, Justice Gavai reiterated that such mat-

ters fall under the government's purview, allowing the petitioners to make a formal representation to the relevant authorities.

The Court directed that if such a representation is made, it must be considered by the government within eight weeks.

The petition cited multiple studies indicating that Indian children are highly vulnerable to digital exploitation and psychological harm: 30% of India's social media users are between 4-18 years old.

A Maharashtra-based study found that 17% of children aged 9-17 spend over six hours daily on social media or gaming platforms.

Excessive digital exposure has been linked to declining academic performance, cognitive impairments, and long-term neurodevelopmental issues.

Neurological research referenced in the petition suggested that excessive social media consumption overstimulates dopamine pathways, mimicking substance addiction and increasing anxiety and depression risks.

The Court said that the petitioners have the option to formally present their concerns to the government, which must respond within eight weeks.

AGENCIES

BANGKOK/NEW DELHI, APR 4 (UND)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today met with Bangladesh Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus in Bangkok, Thailand, during which he underlined India's concerns about the safety and security of Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh, and also urged that "rhetoric that vitiates the environment is best avoided".

The meeting, that lasted half an hour, marked the first bilateral meeting between the leadership of the two sides since the formation of the army-backed Interim Government in Bangladesh in August last year, after the dismissal of the Sheikh Hasina regime.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok. Prime Minister Modi reiterated India's support for a democratic, stable, peaceful, progressive and inclusive Bangladesh.

Enunciating India's people-centric approach to the relationship, Prime Minister Modi highlighted that cooperation between



the two countries has brought tangible benefits to the people of both countries. He underlined India's desire to forge a positive and constructive relationship with Bangladesh based on pragmatism, a statement said.

Prime Minister Modi "urged that rhetoric that vitiates the environment is best avoided", in reference to the anti-India statements being made by several members of the advisory council of the Yunus regime and other officials.

Referring to the border, he said that strict enforcement of the law and prevention of illegal border crossings, especially at night, are necessary for maintaining border security and stability.

Watershed moment for socio-economic justice: PM Modi hails Waqf Amendment Bill 2025

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, APR 4 (UND)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday hailed the passage of the Waqf Amendment Bill 2025 and called it a watershed moment for socio-economic justice, transparency and inclusive growth in the country.

In a social media post on X, PM Modi said, "The passage of the Waqf (Amendment)

Bill and the Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill by both Houses of Parliament marks a watershed moment in our collective quest for socio-economic justice, transparency and inclusive growth."

He further added, "This will particularly help those who have long remained on the margins, thus being denied both voice and opportunity."

Parliament in the wee

hours of Friday (April 4, 2025) cleared the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2025 after a nearly 14-hour debate in Rajya Sabha, with 128 members voting in favour and 95 against.

In the Lok Sabha, the bill was supported by 288 MPs, while 232 voted against it.

According to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, Waqf tribunals will be strengthened, a structured selection process

will be maintained, and a tenure will be fixed to ensure efficient dispute resolution.

As per the bill, while Waqf institutions' mandatory contribution to Waqf boards is reduced from 7 per cent to 5 per cent, Waqf institutions earning over Rs 1 lakh will undergo audits by state-sponsored auditors.

A centralised portal will automate Waqf

property management, improving efficiency and transparency.

The Bill proposes that practising Muslims (for at least five years) can dedicate their property to the Waqf, restoring pre-2013 rules.

It stipulates that women must receive their inheritance before the Waqf declaration, with special provisions for widows, divorced women and orphans.

Prolonged use of antidepressants linked to risk of sudden cardiac death: Study

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

People with prolonged use of antidepressants may be at an increased risk of sudden cardiac death, which varies based on age and time of exposure, finds a study.

Sudden cardiac death refers to an unexpected death of a person, believed to be caused by a heart-related issue.

It occurs within one hour of the onset of symptoms in witnessed cases or within 24 hours of the person being last seen alive in unwitnessed cases.

The study, on 4.3 million residents in Denmark, showed that people exposed to antidepressants for 1 to 5 years had a 56 per cent higher risk of sudden cardiac death. On the other hand, those exposed to antidepressants for six or more years experienced a 2.2 times higher risk.



Among individuals aged 30-39 years, compared with the unexposed general population, those with one to five years of antidepressant exposure were around three times more likely to suffer sudden cardiac death. This risk increased to five times higher for those with six or more years of antidepressant exposure.

In individuals aged 50-59 years, those exposed to antidepressants for one to five years saw their risk of sudden cardiac death doubled. Among individuals exposed to antidepressants for six or more

years, the risk of sudden cardiac death was four times higher.

“Exposure time to antidepressants was associated with a higher risk of sudden cardiac death, and linked to how long the person had been exposed to antidepressants,” said Dr Jasmin Mujkanovic from the Rigshospitalet Hjertecentret, Copenhagen, Denmark.

“Those exposed for six years, or more were at even more increased risk than those exposed for one to five years, when compared with people unexposed to antidepres-

sants in the general population,” Mujkanovic added.

The causes in people under the age of 39 are often a thickening of the heart muscle or an electrical problem with the heart. In older people, it is more likely to be caused by a narrowing of the blood vessels that supply the heart, said the researchers, presenting the study at EHRA 2025, a scientific congress of the European Society of Cardiology.

Mujkanovic explained that the risk of sudden cardiac death may be caused by the potential adverse effects of the antidepressants as well as exposure time.

In addition, “the increase could be influenced by behavioural or lifestyle factors associated with depression, such as delayed healthcare seeking, and poor cardiovascular health,” she added, calling for further research.

8 Benefits of Lemon Warm Water in Summer!

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

As the summer months approach, it's essential to prioritize our health and well-being. One simple yet effective way to do this is by incorporating a morning routine that involves drinking warm lemon water. This humble beverage offers numerous benefits, making it an excellent addition to your daily routine.

Boosts Digestion

Drinking lemon warm water in the morning stimulates digestion and gets your metabolism going. Citric acid found in lemons breaks down food and facilitates the absorption of nutrients. This may result in better digestion, less bloating, and a flat stomach.

Alkalizes the Body

While lemons are acidic, they alkalize the body. Consuming lemon warm water neutralizes the pH level of the body, thereby



lowering the chances of developing chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and osteoporosis.

Hydrates and Detoxifies

Consuming lemon warm water in the morning assists in rehydrating the body after a night of rest. The water aids in flushing out the toxins and waste products, maintaining healthy skin, and diminishing the visibility of acne and other skin problems.

Aids in Weight Loss

Lemon warm water may help in weight loss by enhancing metabolism and reducing hunger. The citric acid found in lemons increases the metabolic

rate of the body, enabling it to burn fat more effectively.

Improves Immune Function

Lemons contain vitamin C, which is vital for a strong immune system. Taking warm lemon water in the morning boosts the immune system, preventing diseases such as the common cold and flu.

Reduces Inflammation

Lemons possess anti-inflammatory compounds, which can minimize inflammation and promote good health. Taking warm lemon water in the morning can relieve the symptoms of arthritis, gout, and other inflammatory conditions.

How to Make Warm Lemon Water

Making warm lemon water is quite straightforward:

Ingredients:
1 cup warm water
Juice of 1/2 lemon
Honey or sugar (optional)

Instructions:
Boil water and allow it to cool for a few minutes. Squeeze the juice of 1/2 lemon into the water.

Add honey or sugar to taste, if needed.

Mix well and consume immediately.

Conclusion

Adding warm lemon water to your morning routine can make a big difference in your overall health and well-being. With its many advantages, such as improving digestion, alkalizing the body, and aiding in weight loss, lemon warm water is a great addition to your daily routine. So, begin your day with a refreshing glass of warm lemon water!

New AI algorithm to predict risk of cardiovascular events, heart-related death

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

A team of researchers in South Korea has developed a novel artificial intelligence (AI)-based algorithm that uses electrocardiograph (ECG) data to predict the risk of cardiovascular events, and heart-related death.

To create the algorithm, the team from Inha University Hospital analysed standard 12-lead electrocardiograph (ECG) data taken from almost half a million cases.

The novel algorithm can identify people most at risk of cardiovascular events and mortality by predicting the biological age of the heart, which is based on how the heart functions.

For example, a person who is 50 but has poor heart health could have a biological heart age of 60, while someone aged 50 with optimal heart health could have a biological



heart age of 40.

“Our research showed that when the biological age of the heart exceeded its chronological age by seven years, the risk of all-cause mortality and major adverse cardiovascular events increased sharply,” said Yong-Soo Baek, Associate Professor at Inha University Hospital.

“Conversely, if the algorithm estimated the biological heart as seven years younger than the chronological age, that reduced the risk of death and major adverse cardiovascular events,” Baek added.

The study showed that

the integration of AI into clinical diagnostics presents novel opportunities for enhancing predictive accuracy in cardiology.

“Using AI to develop algorithms in this way introduces a potential paradigm shift in cardiovascular risk assessment,” said Baek.

For the study, the team developed a deep neural network and trained on a substantial dataset of 425,051 on 12-lead ECGs collected over fifteen years. It was subsequently validated and tested on an independent cohort of 97,058 ECGs. In statistical models, an AI ECG-heart

age exceeding the heart's chronological age by seven years was associated with an increased risk of all-cause mortality by 62 per cent and of MACE by 92 per cent.

In contrast, an AI ECG heart age that was seven years younger than its chronological age reduced the risk of all-cause mortality by 14 per cent and MACE by 27 per cent.

MACE is Major Adverse Cardiovascular Events and includes heart attack, stroke, Cardiovascular death and revascularisation procedures (such as angioplasty and bypass surgery).

“This study confirms the transformative potential of AI in refining clinical assessments and improving patient outcomes,” said Baek.

The study was presented at the ongoing EHRA 2025, a scientific congress of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) in Vienna, Austria.

New highly accurate blood test to measure progress of Alzheimer’s

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

US researchers have developed a new blood test that not only aids in the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease but also indicates how far it has progressed.

While currently available blood tests for Alzheimer's disease can diagnose the disease, they do not indicate the clinical stage of the disease symptoms – that is, the degree of impairment in thinking or memory due to Alzheimer's dementia.

The new test can help doctors determine which patients are likely to benefit from drug treatment and to what extent. It can also provide insight on whether a person's symptoms are likely due to Alzheimer's versus some other cause, said the researchers at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, US and Lund University in Sweden.

In the study, published



in the journal Nature Medicine, the researchers found that levels of a protein called MTBR-tau243 in the blood accurately reflect the amount of toxic accumulation of tau aggregates in the brain and correlate with the severity of Alzheimer's disease.

Analysing blood levels of MTBR-tau243 from a group of people with cognitive decline, the researchers were able to distinguish between people with early- or later-stage Alzheimer's dis-

ease and separate both groups of patients from people whose symptoms were caused by something other than Alzheimer's.

“This blood test clearly identifies Alzheimer's tau tangles, which is our best biomarker measure of Alzheimer's symptoms and dementia,” said co-senior author Randall J. Bateman, Professor of Neurology at Washington University.

“In clinical practice right now, we don't have easy or accessible mea-

sures of Alzheimer's tangles and dementia, and so a tangle blood test like this can provide a much better indication if the symptoms are due to Alzheimer's and may also help doctors decide which treatments are best for their patients,” he added.

The researchers developed a technique to measure MTBR-tau243 levels in people's blood and compared it to the amount of tau tangles in their brains as measured by brain scans.

They piloted the approach on data from two cohorts: 108 people from the US, and a subset of 55 people from Sweden. To assess whether the approach was generalisable, they validated it in an independent dataset consisting of the remaining 739 people in Sweden.

The researchers' analysis showed that blood MTBR-tau243 levels reflected the amount of tau tangles in the brain with 92 per cent accuracy.

4 degree Celsius rise in global temperatures may cut world GDP by 40 pc: Study

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

A team of Australian researchers on Tuesday said that 4-degree Celsius rise in global temperatures would cut world GDP by around 40 per cent by 2100 – a sharp increase from previous estimates of around 11 per cent.

New projections by the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Institute for Climate Risk and Response (ICRR) – published in the journal Environmental Research – fixes an oversight in the current economic model underpinning global climate policy, toppling previous carbon benchmarks.

According to the analysis, the results support limiting global warming to 1.7-degree Celsius, which is in line with significantly faster decarbonisation goals like the Paris Agreement, and far lower than the 2.7-degree Celsius supported under previous



models.

“Economists have traditionally looked at historical data comparing weather events to economic growth to cost climate damages,” said lead researcher Dr Timothy Neal, a ‘Scientia Senior Lecturer’ in the School of Economics and also the ICRR.

What they fail to account for, he said, are interruptions to the global supply chains cur-

rently buffering economic shocks.

“In a hotter future, we can expect cascading supply chain disruptions triggered by extreme weather events worldwide,” Dr Neal added.

He further stated that the economic case for stronger climate change actions is clear. “Because these damages haven't been taken into account, prior economic models have inadvertently con-

cluded that even severe climate change wasn't a big problem for the economy – and it's had profound implications for climate policy,” said the lead researcher.

The local-only damage models have been used in the economic forecasting that has shaped the major powers' climate policies and played a crucial role in international agreements.

The updated projection should underscore to all nations that they are vulnerable to climate change.

“There's an assumption that some colder countries, like Russia or Canada, will benefit from climate change, but supply chain dependencies mean no country is immune,” Dr Neal emphasised.

However, there's still work to be done as “his research doesn't account for climate adaptation, like human migration, which is politically and logistically complex and not yet fully modelled”, said the study.

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Leading ophthalmologists on Tuesday warned that they are witnessing a sharp increase in cases of dry eye syndrome, myopia progression, eye strain and even early-onset squinting in children who spend hours watching reels on various social media platforms.

After raising the alarm bell about the impact of short-form videos on mental health, doctors are now concerned about a new, growing crisis – ‘Reel-Induced Eye Damage.’

Excessive screen time, particularly binge-watching reels on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube, is leading to a spike in eye disorders across all age groups, especially among children and young adults, said healthcare experts during the joint meeting of Asia



Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology and All India Ophthalmological Society in the national capital.

“A student recently visited us complaining of persistent eye irritation and blurry vision. After examination, we found his eyes were not producing enough tears due to prolonged screen time at home watching reels,” said Dr Lalit Verma, President, Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology.

“He was immediately put on eye drops and advised to follow the 20-20-20 rule – taking a 20-second break every 20 minutes to look at something 20 feet away,” said Verma.

Studies show that an increasing number of people, especially students and working professionals, are struggling with digital eye strain, squinting, and worsening eyesight due to prolonged

exposure to high-speed, visually stimulating content.

Doctors also note a troubling trend of social isolation, mental fatigue and cognitive overload associated with constant reel consumption.

Dr Harbansh Lal, Chairman of Organising committee and Past President of All India Ophthalmological Society (AIOS), explained the severity of the issue at the event.

“Short, engaging reels are designed to capture and hold attention for long periods. However, this constant screen fixation reduces blink rates by 50 per cent, leading to dry-eye syndrome and accommodation spasms (difficulty in shifting focus between near and distant objects),” he noted.

Experts warn that if this habit continues unchecked, it could result in long-term vision problems and even permanent eye strain”.



Comeback caps collide in super IPL clash

AGENCIES

CHANDIGARH, APR 4 (UND)

The IPL 2025 season has already thrown up thrilling contests, but none more intriguing than the upcoming showdown between Punjab Kings (PBKS) and Rajasthan Royals (RR) on Saturday at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium, Mullanpur.

At the heart of this encounter lies an electrifying subplot - Shreyas Iyer vs Sanju Samson, two comeback captains with a point to prove.

Both leaders have endured their share of setbacks but are back in the limelight, determined to guide their teams to IPL glory. Iyer has hit the ground running with two unbeaten half-centuries (97* & 52*), leading PBKS to a flawless start with two wins in two matches.

Samson, on the other hand, has been Rajasthan's standout performer with 108 runs in three games, but his team has struggled for consistency. Adding spice to the contest, Samson has dominated PBKS pacer Arshdeep Singh in past encounters.

As both captains push for a spot in India's T20 World Cup squad, this clash is about more than just IPL points, it's about staking a claim on the big stage. Punjab have been in scintillating form, setting the tournament ablaze with two consecutive victories. They started with a thrilling 11-run win over Gujarat Titans, amassing 243/5, before brush-



ing aside Lucknow Super Giants by eight wickets, thanks to a power-packed performance from Prabhsimran Singh and Iyer.

Rajasthan, in contrast, have had a turbulent start. A high-scoring battle against Sunrisers Hyderabad saw them post 242/6, but SRH's record-breaking 286 proved too much. A lacklustre batting display against Kolkata Knight Riders followed, leading to another defeat. However, RR roared back against Chennai Super Kings, defending 182 in a tense 6-run win, with Nitish Rana's explosive 81 off 36 balls proving to be the difference.

Historically, RR hold the edge, having won 16 of their 28 encounters against PBKS, while Punjab have triumphed 11 times, with one match ending in a tie.

PBKS' batting unit looks formidable, with Iyer and Prabhsimran Singh leading the charge. Priyansh Arya, who smashed 47 off 23 against Gujarat Titans, is another key contributor at the top. Nehal Wadhwa adds depth, having played an unbeaten 43-run cameo in the last match.

In the all-rounders'

department, Shashank Singh, Glenn Maxwell, and Marcus Stoinis provide balance. Maxwell is yet to fire with the bat but has been handy with the ball, while Stoinis is still searching for his best form.

PBKS bowling will rely on Arshdeep, who has already bagged five wickets in two matches. Lockie Ferguson and Marco Jansen will bring pace and bounce, while Yuzvendra Chahal is expected to play a crucial role in the spin department.

RR's hopes rest on their captain, Samson, who has been the most consistent batsman for them. He has found support from Dhruv Jurel, who played a breathtaking 70-run knock against SRH, and Nitish Rana, whose blistering 81 against CSK turned the tide for Rajasthan.

Their bowling attack will be led by Wanindu Hasaranga, who has five wickets in two games, including a sensational four-wicket haul in the last match. Jofra Archer's fiery pace, Tushar Deshpande's swing, and Maheesh Theekshana's mystery spin add variety to RR's bowling arsenal.

Match day in Mullan-

pur promises clear skies with temperatures ranging between 19 and 37 degrees Celsius. The pitch is expected to favour batsmen initially but could offer turn for spinners as the game progresses. Teams chasing have historically had the advantage at this venue, with three out of five matches last season won by the side batting second.

Punjab have the momentum and enter as favourites, but Rajasthan are desperate to turn their season around. With two of IPL 2025's most dynamic captains going head-to-head, expect a contest filled with fireworks, tactical battles, and high-voltage drama.

The team winning the toss is likely to bowl first, looking to exploit the chasing advantage at Mullanpur.

Teams: Punjab Kings Predicted XI: Priyansh Arya, Prabhsimran Singh (wk), Shreyas Iyer (c), Shashank Singh, Marcus Stoinis, Glenn Maxwell, Suryansh Shedge, Marco Jansen, Lockie Ferguson, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh. Key Players: Shreyas Iyer, Prabhsimran Singh, Arshdeep Singh.

Rajasthan Royals Predicted XI: Yashasvi Jaiswal, Sanju Samson, Nitish Rana, Riyan Parag (c), Dhruv Jurel (wk), Shimron Hetmyer, Wanindu Hasaranga, Jofra Archer, Maheesh Theekshana, Sandeep Sharma, Tushar Deshpande. Key Players: Sanju Samson, Nitish Rana, Wanindu Hasaranga.

ing his former franchise cricket teammate, the former West Indies skipper asserted that Sharma had 'earned the right' to 'not be pressurised'.

"There are times when you have a couple of low scores ... he has earned the right as an individual to now enjoy his cricket and not be pressurised in certain situations. So let's not judge on a couple of low scores," Pollard said.

"In cricket, we know we fail more than we succeed and I'm sure we'll be singing his praises when he gives us that big score and then we'll be on to the next hot topic," he added.

Pollard confident Rohit Sharma will find his rhythm again

AGENCIES

MUMBAI, APR 4 (UND)

Rohit Sharma has had a patchy record so far in the Indian Premier League in the first three fixtures.

The Indian skipper has scored 21 runs from three innings with a highest score of 13.

However, Mumbai Indians batting coach Kieron Pollard backs the Indian talisman to return to his run-scoring best.

"I've played alongside Rohit since Under-19 cricket and he has forged his name and etched his name in history in the record books, in differ-



ent situations, different formats of the game," Pollard said..

"He is a legend of the game in his own right, and as an individual as well," Pollard said.

Rohit came into the Indian Premier League

season on the back off a triumphant Champions Trophy 2025, where he led from the front with a brilliant 76 (83) as he set the foundation for India's win over New Zealand in the summit clash.

Furthermore, back-

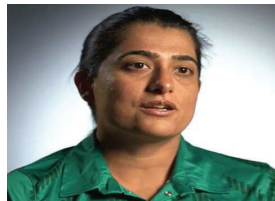
Sana Mir puts onus on senior players to step up at World Cup 2025 Qualifier

AGENCIES

LAHORE, APR 4 (UND)

Former captain Sana Mir believes Pakistan's senior players must step up during the upcoming ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier to ensure the side continues their streak of appearing at every 50-over World Cup since 2009.

Pakistan have appeared at the last four editions of



the 50-over tournament, but have their work cut out to make it five on the trot and earn a place at this year's event in India given they are one of six sides

fighting for two places at the tournament proper during this month's Qualifier on home soil.

The side must finish in the top two places at the six-team Qualifier event to book their tickets to the tournament and Sana thinks Pakistan's experienced players must step up and show the way.

Pakistan will be led by skipper Fatima Sana at the

Qualifier event and will be boosted by the return of key pacer Diana Baig from injury and the inclusion of experienced trio Sidra Amin, Nashra Sundhu and Aliya Riaz among their 15-player squad.

And Sana wants to see the senior players step up and lead by example to ensure Pakistan earn their spot at this year's World Cup, an ICC report said.

Uphill task awaits CSK in a key face off with DC in IPL contest

AGENCIES

CHENNAI, APR 4 (UND)

Having started on a winning note in a tricky chase against MI, home favourites Chennai Super Kings (CSK) comes face to face against a confident Delhi Capitals in a key IPL encounter at the Chepauk Stadium here on Saturday.

The back to back losses for CSK has been haunting the team despite coming close to overhaul the target.

But the biggest problem, the five time winners face is to get its combination and balance right.

The top order has failed to deliver losing wickets in the power play unable to force the pace as has been done by the other teams.

The fact that CSK has been facing problems in the middle overs losing wickets at regular intervals is also a matter of concern.

The top order was yet to fire to its potential. The team management did the right thing replacing

Deepak Hooda after his twin failures in the first two matches and another opener Rahul Tripathi too failed to rise to the occasion.

With exception of skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad and Rachin Ravindra, the top order worries was more bothersome for the home



team.

With tomorrow's contest, being a day contest, the dew factor might not come into play.

But the due factor is to get its balance right both at the batting order and in bowling.

Ruturaj had won three successive tosses in the last three matches and opted to bowl first.

There is no questioning the fact that he chose to bowl in the first match as it was a fresh edition, fresh line up and a fresh wicket and could not decipher how it could behave.

Though CSK managed to chase down the tricky target, despite the skipper's fireworks, the loss of wickets in the middle overs was a concern. Had Mumbai Indians scored another 15 to 20 extra runs, the chase for the home would have been even more trickier.

However, two successive losses after the win-

ning start, has halted the team's momentum.

It had lost by a big margin to RCB at home in yet another chase that enabled RCB to break the 17-year-old jinx of recording its first win in Chennai.

Next, the loss to Rajasthan Royals in the away match by a close margin, has prompted the team management to rejig their strategy.

First thing is they should get the top order back in form and it would be more prudent to draft in Devon Conway to partner his compatriot and in form Rachin Ravindra as opener with the skipper at No.3.

The team management should also address the issue of having a more balanced middle order that would rotate the strike in the middle overs instead of losing wickets due to poor shot selection that had cost the team dearly in the last two contests.

Pacer Khaleel Ahmed is in the nick of things giving breakthroughs in the powerplay, having taken more than 25 wickets so far in IPL, with Jamie Overton likely to retain his place. The spin department is in the safe hands of the experienced offie R.Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, with left arm spinner

Noor Ahmed proving to be a vital cog in the wheel leading the purple cap table with his mesmerising variations.

A tough contest awaits the home team, while DC with two wins from two matches, including a narrow one wicket win in the last match against LSG after a convincing victory over SRH in the opening encounter, has a more balanced combination with K L Rahul and the experienced Faf Du Plessis, besides Karun Nair and Jake Fraser-McGurk with Abhishek Porel and Tristan Stubbs lending solidity in the middle order. The bowlers led by skipper and spinner Axr Patel have risen to the occasion and with the wicket expected to traditionally assist the spinners, the slow bowlers could be the deciding factor in the end, with CSK looking to get back its winning touch and DC keen to extend its winning momentum.

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