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Youth Key to J&K's Prosperous Future : LG at Navreh Celebrations

Manoj Sinha urges deeper connect with traditions, spiritual heritage

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 19: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said that Jammu and Kashmir has the potential to grow into a vibrant cultural hub and a prosperous Union Territory, stressing that the responsibility of achieving this vision lies with the younger generation. Addressing Navreh celebrations organised by the Kashmiri Pandit Sabha at Amphalla here, Sinha called upon the youth to build a strong and lasting connection with the country's timeless traditions, rich spiritual heritage and

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Snowfall Drapes Kashmir Heights, Rains Drench Plains

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: Fresh snowfall in the higher reaches and heavy rainfall across the plains on Thursday brought a sharp dip in temperatures across Kashmir, officials said.

The famous tourist resorts of Gulmarg and Sonamarg received fresh snowfall, with intermittent spells continuing through the day. Officials said Gulmarg recorded an accumulation of about five to six inches of snow since Wednesday.

Several other high-altitude areas also witnessed snowfall, including Pir Ki Gali, Razdan Top in Gurez, and Sadhna Top. Most upper reaches of the Valley have been experiencing intermittent snowfall since Sunday.

Meanwhile, the plains, including Srinagar, were lashed by heavy rains, further pulling down temperatures.

The Meteorological Department has forecast unsettled weather conditions till March 20, with intermittent light to moderate rain or snowfall expected in most areas. Higher reaches of the Chenab Valley and parts of south Kashmir may receive moderate to heavy snowfall.

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West Asia Crisis Tests Global Resolve, India Steps Up Diplomatic Push

MEA says sustained engagement ensures energy security, safe passage of LPG ships

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: India on Thursday described the escalating conflict in West Asia as a "testing time" for the entire global community, asserting

that New Delhi has intensified diplomatic engagement to safeguard its strategic interests, particularly energy security and the safety of its nationals abroad. Addressing an inter-ministerial briefing, Ministry of Exter-

nal Affairs spokesperson

Randhir Jaiswal said Indian leadership has been in constant touch with counterparts across the region as hostilities entered their 20th day.

"It has been a testing time,"

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Self-Reliant Skies: Rajnath Pushes Indigenous Drone Manufacturing Amid Global Conflicts

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: Rajnath Singh on Thursday called for the creation of a robust and fully indigenous drone manufacturing ecosystem in India, asserting that recent global conflicts have highlighted the decisive role of unmanned systems and counter-drone technologies in modern warfare. Addressing the National Defence Indus-



tries Conclave here, Singh said the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict as well as tensions between Iran and Israel have demonstrated how drones are rapidly transforming the nature of warfare.

"As the entire world watches these conflicts, the extremely significant role of drones and counter-drone technologies in future warfare is becoming clear," he

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Ram Temple Milestones Are Golden Moments In India's History: President Murmu

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

AYODHYA (UP), MAR 19: President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday termed key milestones associated with the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple as "golden moments" in the country's history, while extending greetings to devotees during her visit. The president said this while addressing a gathering after visiting



the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Thursday, and installed a 150-kg gold-plated metal plate called the 'Shri Ram Yantra' as part of special religious ceremonies.

"The bhoomi puja at this sacred Ram Janmabhoomi, the Pran Pratishtha here, the opening of Ram Darbar for devotees, and the hoisting of the Dharma Dhvaj on the

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West Asia Crisis: PM Modi calls for dialogue

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday intensified India's diplomatic outreach on the escalating West Asia crisis, holding a series of telephonic conversations with key regional and global leaders and strongly pitching for dialogue and diplomacy as the only viable path to restore peace and stability.

In a day marked by multiple high-level engagements, Modi spoke with Oman Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Jordan's King Abdullah II, French President Emmanuel Macron and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, while also following up on discussions held a day earlier with Kuwait Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Across all conversations, the Prime Minister conveyed India's deep concern over the

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PM Modi Greet People on Navratri, Various Festivals

HT NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday greeted people on the start of Navratri and also the traditional Indian new year, which is celebrated in the form of various

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Kashmir markets bustling with last-minute Eid rush despite rain

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: A visible excitement and last-minute rush gripped markets across Kashmir on Thursday as shoppers thronged bazaars for

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LPG Demand Eases, But Supply Concerns Persist Amid West Asia Crisis

Bookings return to near-normal after panic surge; commercial users continue to face severe shortages

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: Domestic LPG bookings have begun stabilising and are nearing pre-crisis levels,



offering some relief after days of panic buying triggered by disruptions in global supply chains.

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A Voice That Refused to Fall Silent...

Shaheed-e-Sahafat
Dr. Syed Shujaat Bukhari

Eight years on, Syed Shujaat Bukhari remains the enduring symbol of courage and conscience in Kashmir's journalism

Eight years after his martyrdom, the legacy of Syed Shujaat Bukhari continues to resonate across Jammu & Kashmir as a powerful reminder of what fearless journalism truly stands for. He was not merely an editor, but a bold and balanced voice who carried the weight of Kashmir's complexities with rare clarity and conviction. His assassination was not just the loss of a journalist, but the silencing of a voice that consistently sought to inform, connect, and heal. It marked a turning point for the media fraternity in J&K and the country, leaving behind a void that remains deeply felt. Yet, his spirit endures in every journalist who dares to report with honesty and courage. In remembering Shujaat Bukhari, one remembers not just a man, but a standard—of integrity, bravery, and the enduring power of the written word. Remembered by the Editor-in-Chief of Daily Headlines Today, Bukhari's caliber lay in his ability to speak truth in the most difficult of times. His writing reflected depth, restraint, and an unshaken commitment to dialogue over discord qualities that made him stand apart in an increasingly fragile media environment.

Team - Headlines Today

CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

Youth Key....

wisdom. He said the youth would not merely inherit India's legacy but actively reshape it and propel it towards a developed and sustainable future.

Expressing optimism about the region's growth, the Lieutenant Governor said steady progress could transform Jammu and Kashmir into a flourishing centre of culture and development. "I sincerely hope that our youth will draw strength from the wisdom passed down by our ancestors and work with determination to elevate Jammu and Kashmir to a place among the country's developed regions," he said.

Invoking blessings for the well-being of all, Sinha described the worship of Maa Durga and Maa Sharika as a reverence to the primal source of power, adding that sincere devotion enables seekers to attain the essence of reality.

Highlighting the spiritual significance of Navreh and Navratri, he termed the festivals an inner journey marked by fasting, prayer and discipline, which transforms the devotee from within. He also spoke of four stages of devotion—listening, contemplation, internalisation and attaining samadhi, where the knower and the known merge as one—and prayed that devotees experience these stages in life.

The Lieutenant Governor extended New Year greetings to the people and wished for peace, prosperity and renewed hope. On the occasion, he felicitated Padma Shri awardee Brij Lal Bhat.

Several dignitaries, including members of the Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, senior officials and prominent citizens, were present at the celebrations.

Snowfall Drapes....

Weather conditions are likely to improve from March 21 to 24, with generally dry conditions expected, although a brief spell of rain or snow may occur on March 23. Light precipitation is also likely between March 26 and 28, followed by another spell from March 29 to 31, particularly in higher altitudes.

The MeT Office has also warned of thunder, gusty winds with speeds of 40-50 km/h, and isolated hailstorms in some areas, advising farmers to resume agricultural activities after March 21.

West Asia....

not just for us, but for the entire global community," he said, adding that sustained diplomatic outreach has already yielded results, including facilitating the movement of two Indian LPG vessels through the critical Strait of Hormuz.

The conflict, which erupted on February 28 following military strikes by the United States-Israel combine on Iran, has since widened, with Tehran targeting Gulf nations hosting US military bases, raising concerns over global energy supplies and regional stability.

Jaiswal said India remains in close contact with multiple stakeholders to ensure uninterrupted energy flows while prioritising the safety and well-being of the large Indian diaspora in the region.

Additional Secretary (Gulf) in the MEA, Aseem R Mahajan, said the government is closely monitoring the evolving situation across the Gulf and broader West Asia, as diplomatic efforts continue amid mounting uncertainty.

Self-Reliant.....

said, stressing the need for India to draw lessons and act swiftly.

Emphasising the importance of strategic autonomy and defence preparedness, Singh said India must aim for complete self-reliance in drone manufacturing, extending beyond finished products to critical components such as engines, batteries, software and structural moulds.

"This self-reliance is necessary not only at the product level but also at the component level," he said, noting that many countries currently depend on imports for key drone components.

The conclave was attended by senior officials from defence public sector undertakings and top executives of leading domestic defence firms, reflecting a coordinated push to strengthen indigenous capabilities.

The Defence Minister also highlighted the growing role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, automation and simulation in reshaping global manufacturing, urging industry leaders to focus on innovation and quality to meet future security challenges.

"This task is not easy," Singh said, "but it is essential for securing India's strategic interests in an increasingly technology-driven world."

Ram Temple....

top of the temple — all these are golden moments in our history," the president said.

She began her address with the chant of 'Jai Sri Ram' and described Ayodhya as 'dearer than heaven' to Lord Ram. "Lord Shri Ram was born in this Ayodhya city. It is a matter of great fortune for me to touch this holy land." Recalling references from scriptures, she said, "Lord Shri Ram himself had described this place of his birth as superior to heaven.

In Ramcharitmanas, Lord Shri Ram tells Sita ji that although everyone has described Vainkunt, I find Avadh puri dearer to me." She emphasised the special place Ayodhya holds in the hearts of devotees: "This city of Ayodhya is most dear to all Ram devotees," she said.

Highlighting the cultural and constitutional significance of Lord Ram's legacy, Murmu said, "The very artistic line drawing of Lord Shri Ram's arrival in Ayodhya with Mata Sita and Lakshmanji after winning the Ram-Ravan war is adorned in the fundamental image of our constitution. This line drawing appears at the beginning of the very important Part 3 of the Fundamental Rights." She expressed happiness over efforts to spread awareness about this depiction. "I am happy to know that this painting is spreading awareness and knowledge, and connecting the public with constitutional ideals and sacred cultural symbols," she said.

The president extended her festive greetings, saying, "I extend my heartfelt greetings to all Indians and Ram devotees living in India and abroad for the New Year. On Ram Navami, at the end of Navratri, we all celebrate the birth anniversary of Lord Shri Ram. I extend my greetings to everyone on Ram Navami in advance." (Agencies)

West Asia....

rapidly deteriorating situation in West Asia and reiterated a consistent message: immediate de-escalation, respect for sovereignty, and sustained diplomatic engagement are essential to prevent further instability.

Oman: Condemns sovereignty violation, praises evacuation efforts

During his conversation with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Modi strongly condemned the recent violation of Oman's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He also appreciated Oman's proactive role in facilitating the safe return of thousands of people, including Indian nationals caught in the conflict zone.

The two leaders agreed that dialogue and diplomacy must be prioritised to achieve de-escalation and ensure long-term peace. They also underscored the importance of maintaining safe and free navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, a critical artery for global energy supplies.

Jordan: Concern over escalation, warning on energy infrastructure attacks

In his call with King Abdullah II — the second interaction between the two leaders this month — Modi expressed concern over the evolving security situation and stressed the urgent need for restoring peace, security and stability.

He condemned attacks on energy infrastructure in the region, cautioning that such actions could trigger wider escalation. Modi also acknowledged Jordan's efforts in assisting the evacuation of Indian nationals stranded in conflict-affected areas.

Both leaders reiterated their support for unhindered transit of goods and energy, emphasising the global economic implications of prolonged instability in the region.

France: Push for coordinated global response

In his conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron, Modi highlighted the urgency of de-escalation and called for a return to dialogue and diplomacy. The two leaders agreed to continue close coordination in advancing peace and stability not only in West Asia but also in the broader international context.

Malaysia: Shared commitment to peace through diplomacy

Modi also spoke to Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, with both sides expressing concern over the crisis and reaffirming their shared commitment to restoring peace through diplomatic means. The Prime Minister extended greetings ahead of Hari Raya Aidilfitri during the interaction. (Agencies)

PM Modi....

festivals across India.

Extending greetings for Nav Samvatsar, Navratri, Gudi Padwa, Ugadi, Cheti Chand, Navreh and Sajibu Cheiraoba, the prime minister said the festivals mark the arrival of a new year, bringing with it a sense of renewal, hope and fresh possibilities.

"Greetings to everyone on the very special occasion of Nav Samvatsar. May everyone be blessed with infinite happiness, success and good health," he said in a message.

"I pray that this coming new year further strengthens the spirit of courage, self-confidence and service in everyone's lives. May it also add renewed momentum to our collective efforts towards nation-building," Modi said.

Nav Samvatsar, the Hindu New Year (Vikram Samvat 2083), begins on Thursday, marking the start of the Chaitra Shukla Pratipada.

The prime minister greeted people on the occasion of Navratri, a festival observed in honour of the goddess Durga.

"Heartfelt best wishes for Navratri to all my family members across the nation. May this divine occasion of worshipping the Supreme Power bring happiness, good fortune, prosperity, and excellent health to everyone," he said in Hindi.

Modi said by the boundless grace of Maa Durga, the embodiment of Shakti, may there be welfare for all, providing new energy to

the resolve for a 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India). "Jai Ambe Jagdamba Maa!" he said.

"On the holy occasion of Navratri, I pray to the Goddess to bless everyone with her affection and compassion. Jai Mata Di!" he said. He also greeted people on the occasion of Gudi Padwa, a festival that marks the traditional new year for Marathis.

"Warm greetings to everyone on the vibrant occasion of Gudi Padwa! This beautiful festival marks the arrival of a new year, bringing with it a sense of renewal, hope and fresh possibilities," he said.

The prime minister hoped that the year ahead would be filled with joy, success and good health for all.

"May it encourage each one of us to move forward with determination, nurture our aspirations and make meaningful contributions," he said.

Modi wished people on the occasion of Ugadi, a new year festival celebrated in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Karnataka.

He said this festival is rooted in tradition and symbolises new energy and beginnings.

"Ugadi marks the start of a new year and I pray that the coming year is full of happiness, success and wonderful health. May this year inspire everyone to pursue their aspirations with sincerity and contribute positively to society," he said.

Modi conveyed his greetings on the occasion of Cheti Chand, a festival that marks the beginning of the new year for the Sindhi community.

"Best wishes on Cheti Chand! Praying for a very good year. May this sacred festival bring joy, fulfil hopes and aspirations and strengthen the spirit of togetherness in society. May the divine blessings of Lord Jhulelal guide us all towards peace and prosperity," he said.

The PM also extended greetings on the occasion of Navreh, a new year festival celebrated by Kashmiri Pandits. "Navreh Poshte! Have a great year ahead. Warm greetings on the joyous occasion of Navreh!" he said.

Modi said as people welcome the new year, may it usher in fresh hopes, renewed energy and abundant opportunities for all.

"Let this new year inspire us to move forward with confidence, embrace new possibilities and work towards a brighter, healthier and more fulfilling future," he said.

The prime minister also greeted people on the occasion of Sajibu Cheiraoba, a new year festival of Meiteis of Manipur.

"Sajibu Cheiraoba greetings. Wishing everyone a wonderful year. May the new year usher in abundant joy, prosperity and success in all your endeavours. Praying that the spirit of hope and positivity prevails everywhere," he said. (Agencies)

Kashmir markets....

last-minute Eid purchases. From early morning, markets in Srinagar and other districts witnessed heavy footfall, with people, young and old, making a final dash to buy clothes, bakery items, footwear and essentials ahead of Eid.

Despite intermittent rain and a dip in temperatures, the enthusiasm remained undeterred.

Vendors said the last days before Eid are always crucial, with this year too, the turnout is good as families came out together, many after days of waiting for the right time to shop.

"There is always a different feeling in the air before Eid. People want everything perfect, new clothes for children, and special food for guests. It is not just shopping, it is part of the celebration," a local shopkeeper in Srinagar told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

Notably, parents were seen accompanying children, while youth crowded garment and footwear stores, adding to the festive buzz. The spirit of Eid was visible in every corner of the markets, with bakeries witnessing queues and roadside vendors doing good business.

While the prevailing weather conditions caused brief disruptions, shoppers made the most of dry intervals, underscoring their determination to complete preparations in time—(KNO)

LPG Demand....

However, the overall situation remains fragile, with significant supply constraints continuing to affect commercial consumers.

Prior to the February 28 military strikes by the United States and Israel on Iran, India's over 33 crore LPG consumers were booking around 55 lakh cylinders daily. The escalation and subsequent retaliation led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial energy corridor, cutting off nearly 60 per cent of India's LPG imports and triggering widespread panic among consumers.

Bookings surged to a peak of 87.7 lakh cylinders on March 13 but have since dropped to around 56-57 lakh per day as of March 18, indicating a return to near-normal demand.

Officials said panic booking is subsiding, with the government prioritising supplies to domestic households. Despite the stabilisation in demand, authorities cautioned that the LPG supply situation remains "worrisome," although no distributor has reported a complete stock-out.

Commercial consumers, including hotels and businesses, continue to bear the brunt

of the shortage, receiving only about 20 per cent of their usual requirement.

To bridge the gap, domestic LPG production has been increased by over 40 per cent in the past two weeks. Public sector oil marketing companies have also stepped up operations, maintaining delivery levels close to those seen before the crisis. On March 18, 54.91 lakh cylinders were delivered against bookings of over 56 lakh, while peak deliveries during the surge touched 62.5 lakh and 60 lakh cylinders on March 13 and 14, respectively.

Authorities said supplies are being closely monitored, with uninterrupted deliveries to households and no reported dry-outs at distributorships. Digital adoption has surged, with 94 per cent of bookings now being made online, and the Delivery Authentication Code system covering 83 per cent of consumers.

In a bid to ease pressure on LPG supplies, consumers in areas with city gas networks are being encouraged to shift to piped natural gas, while alternative fuels such as kerosene are also being promoted. Over the past two weeks, 1.25 lakh new gas connections across domestic, commercial and industrial segments have been issued.

Meanwhile, enforcement agencies have intensified action against black marketing and hoarding, with raids, seizures and FIRs reported from several states. The Centre has also urged state governments to take strict measures to ensure fair distribution and prevent illegal practices.

Even as demand shows signs of normalisation, officials said the situation remains under close watch amid continuing geopolitical tensions impacting global energy supplies.

CIK busts international cyber fraud racket in Srinagar

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) on Thursday said that it has received various technical and credible inputs regarding the functioning of covert call centres engaged in fraudulent online activities targeting foreign/local nationals.

In a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), a CIK spokesperson said, "After receiving the inputs CIK promptly constituted specialized teams comprising technical experts and field operatives and carried out systematic surveillance, digital intelligence gathering and verification across multiple locations, ultimately identifying a key operational hub at the Industrial Area, Rangreth, Srinagar."

He said in furtherance to this, a CIK team conducted swift and well-coordinated raids at different parts across Srinagar city.

"During the raid, seven suspects were apprehended on the spot and digital and communication equipment, including 13 mobile phones, 09 laptops, VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) systems, SIM cards and networking devices, digital storage media etc, were seized from them," the spokesperson added.

He said the seized material contained substantial incriminating evidence, clearly indicating a highly organized and technologically advanced criminal setup.

"Preliminary investigation has revealed that the accused were part of a larger, well-coordinated cybercrime syndicate with linkages extending beyond Jammu & Kashmir. Part of the network was specifically designed to target victims in countries such as USA, UK and Canada, operate through international communication masking technologies, use psychological manipulation and impersonation tactics and launder money through modern digital and cryptocurrency channels," said the spokesperson.

He said the accused had established a covert unregistered call centre infrastructure using VoIP-based systems, enabling them to generate international virtual numbers, mask their real location using server routing and spoofing techniques and appear as

legitimate service providers to unsuspecting victims.

"International calls were being generated and routed through this call centre. A fake YahooMail.com website and Google advertisements were used to target victims."

He further said individuals across multiple countries were approached through organized call operations and online phishing ads. Once a victim clicked on the advertisement, a toll-free number appeared on their screen. This toll-free number was operated by the suspects, who then deceived innocent people into providing their banking and other personal details.

"Funds were subsequently transferred into various accounts, including mule accounts and cryptocurrency wallets (primarily USDT). The illicit proceeds were further layered, converted and withdrawn to conceal their origin."

Victims were contacted and deceived into believing that their devices or bank accounts were compromised and they needed to pay for technical support or avoid penalties. The fraudulently obtained money was then transferred via banking channels, digital wallets and cryptocurrency and routed through mule accounts. It was then converted into USDT and other cryptocurrencies and layered multiple times to evade detection and tracing. "Notably, no cash transactions were involved, highlighting the fully digital and sophisticated nature of the crime. The transactions carried so far seem to be running in several cores."

"An FIR is being registered under relevant provisions of law, including cheating, criminal conspiracy and relevant sections of the Information Technology Act. Follow-up raids are being conducted to apprehend additional suspects. Forensic analysis of seized devices is underway. Efforts are ongoing to identify victims and trace financial flows. The wider network, including national and international linkages, is under investigation," said the spokesperson, adding that this successful operation highlights the presence of a highly organized, globally connected cyber fraud network operating from within the region—(KNO)

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J&K Bank logs Rs 8,300 crore Eid transactions across UT

UPI leads with over 4 crore transactions; nearly 6 crore deals recorded in 4 days

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: Banking activity across Jammu and Kashmir witnessed a sharp spike during the Eid-ul-Fitr shopping period, with digital platforms leading the surge as thousands of people turned to cashless modes for festive purchases.

Notably, trends from the Eid-ul-Fitr rush indicate a decisive shift towards digital payments across the region.

As per official data of J&K Bank, available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), non-branch banking transactions between March 16 and 19 touched Rs 8,393.88 crore, spread across 5,94,00,887 transactions, reflect-

ing robust economic activity ahead of Eid.

Going forward, such spikes are expected to increase further tomorrow, being the last day of the holy month of Ramadan, with growing digital penetration and consumer preference for faster payment modes.

As per the data, UPI remained the dominant transaction channel, recording 4,00,48,711 transactions worth Rs 3,125.00 crore during the four-day period.

It further said that mobile-based mPay services also witnessed significant activity, logging 1,70,58,715 transactions amounting to Rs 2,991.70 crore. The volume is expected to rise further with the culmination of Ramadan and peak



festive shopping.

The data further revealed that despite the digital surge, ATM withdrawals continued alongside, with

15,50,168 transactions worth Rs 658.57 crore, indicating that cash still plays a parallel role during high-spending periods. "High-

value transactions through banking channels remained significant, with Rs 1,466.00 crore worth of transactions recorded, although the number of such transactions stood at 83,641," the data said.

It added that kiosk banking also maintained its presence in underserved areas, facilitating 65,952 transactions worth Rs 152.61 crore during the period.

It is important to mention that Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed a steady rise in digital banking adoption over the past few years. While multiple banks operate in the region, J&K Bank remains the largest and most widely used financial institution, with a dominant presence in both urban and rural areas—(KNO)

Shaheed Dr Syed Shujaat Bukhari remembered on his Eighth Death Anniversary

Special prayers held at Kreeri

AASHIQ HUSSAIN

KREERI, MAR 19: Veteran Journalist Dr. Syed Shujaat Bukhari remembered today on his Eighth death anniversary. The Rising Kashmir media group founder fell to the bullets of unknown gunmen on June 14th 2018 along with his two security guards outside his Press Enclave office.

According to reports, a special prayer was held this morning at his ancestral graveyard at Kreeri in Baramulla district, in which hundreds of mourners participated. A large number of people from the



area had assembled early morning along with Shujaat's Son Tamheed Shujaat, MLA Wagoora Kreeri Adv Irfan Hafiz Lone, Principal HR Sec School Danganpora Mushtaq Sopori, Syed Farooq Bukhari and Suhail Bukhari to pay tribute to the departed soul.

Authorities in Sopore divert traffic, mark no-parking zones ahead of Eid

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SOPORE, MAR 19: Authorities on Thursday issued a traffic advisory for Sopore town ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr prayers, citing continuous rainfall and forecast of further inclement weather.

As per the advisory, Eid congregational prayers will not be held at Eidgah Noorgah this year. The decision follows announcements by Auqaf committees managing Jamia Masjid Sopore and Khanqah-e-Moula Sopore, where major gatherings are expected instead. Officials, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said both locations lie in the congested core of Sopore town and have limited parking space. Traffic restrictions and diversions have been put in place to prevent congestion and ensure smooth movement.

According to the plan, traffic from Chinkipora, Arampora and Shalpora will not be allowed beyond Shalpora Chowk towards the main town centre. Commuters from Iqbal Market side will be stopped at the Clock Tower, while vehicles from Degree College crossing will not be permitted towards the main chowk via Shah Dargah.

Traffic from Tarzoo and Ningli will be diverted through Sofi Akbar Road. Movement towards Hathishah Bridge has been restricted, with the route reserved for emergency vehicles. Similarly, no general traffic will be allowed from Chankhan Bridge towards Khanqah-e-Moula and Hathishah, with the stretch declared a no-parking zone.

Authorities have advised all heavy and light motor vehicles to use the bypass road for travel towards Srinagar, Kupwara and Bandipora. Designated parking areas have been identified at Bus Stand Sopore, Shah Dargah and other roadside locations.

Officials urged people to avoid unnecessary vehicular movement towards prayer venues and prefer walking to ease congestion. They also appealed to the public to cooperate with police and volunteers to ensure the smooth conduct of Eid prayers—(KNO)

A Voice That Still Echoes: Shujaat Bukhari Remembered on 8th Martyrdom Anniversary

Floral tributes and heartfelt prayers mark a poignant gathering at Kreeri Muradabad as cultural bodies honour his enduring legacy

HT NEWS NETWORK

KREERI, MAR 19: The eighth death anniversary of noted journalist and editor Shujaat Bukhari was observed with solemnity and reverence at his ancestral village Muradabad Kreeri in north Kashmir's Baramulla district on Thursday. Members of various socio-cultural organisations, civil society groups, and local residents visited his ancestral graveyard, where they offered prayers and paid floral tributes to remember the slain journalist, whose assassination in 2018 was widely seen as a significant loss

to Kashmir's media fraternity.

Among the prominent organisations, the Kruhen Cultural Forum Kreeri held a commemorative gathering at the graveyard and described Bukhari as a "great son of the soil" who dedicated his life to journalism, dialogue, and peace-building in the region. Speakers on the occasion highlighted his fearless reporting, intellectual depth, and unwavering commitment to truth.

Similarly, Adbi Markaz Kamraaz, one of the leading cultural organisations of Jammu and Kashmir, also paid rich tributes, recalling Bukhari's

immense contribution to journalism and his efforts to promote a culture of understanding and reconciliation.

Participants observed that Bukhari's legacy continues to inspire young journalists and writers across the Valley. They emphasized the need to uphold the values he stood for: courage, integrity, and responsible journalism. The commemorative event concluded with prayers for eternal peace to the departed soul, as attendees reaffirmed their resolve to remember and carry forward the ideals of one of Kashmir's most respected journalistic voices.

SKIMS to fill 1,100 vacancies through JKSSB, JKPSC

'Infrastructure upgrades, operational shifts to improve specialist care'

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: To cut down on patient load and delays in specialised care, Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura, has initiated the process to fill around 1,100 vacant posts through the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) and Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC).

Director SKIMS Soura, Dr Ashraf Ganie, speaking to the media on the sidelines of the com-

missioning of high-end medical equipment and advanced diagnostic facilities at the institute on Wednesday, said the recruitment drive is crucial to addressing persistent manpower shortages that have impacted waiting time for consultations and surgeries, particularly in super-specialty departments.

"We have taken up around 1,100 posts for referral to recruiting agencies. Once these positions are filled, the institute will be in a much better position to handle patient flow," the

Director said, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

Dr Ganie, however, said that waiting periods at SKIMS were still comparatively lower than those at leading institutions outside J&K. "In many premier hospitals, waiting time can stretch to months. At SKIMS, it is generally within six to twelve weeks in super-specialties," he said.

To bring down delays, the institute is planning operational changes alongside recruitment. "Once adequate manpower is in

place, we intend to start double shifts in outpatient departments and operation theatres. This will significantly reduce waiting time," he added.

Officials said general medicine and general surgery departments continue to cater to patients on a daily basis, but super-specialty services remain under strain due to heavy demand.

Alongside staffing measures, SKIMS has undertaken a major overhaul of its medical infrastructure over the past two years. Dr Ganie said outdated and defunct

equipment has been replaced, and gaps in critical care facilities have largely been addressed.

"We found that many essential machines had not been procured for years. Over the last two years, we have utilised the full budget and supplemented it with support from central agencies to upgrade facilities," he said.

Among the key additions is a high-end linear accelerator for cancer treatment, procured at a cost of around Rs 39 crore, expected to be installed within the next few months—(KNO)

Kashmir Bakers Confectioners Association's Mega Eid Outreach: Over 560 Bakery Kits Distributed To Underprivileged Families Across Valley

"Ensuring The Needy Share In Eid Happiness Is A Collective Social Obligation,": President Shahid Hussain Mir

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: In a commendable humanitarian initiative aimed at including underprivileged and deserving families in the festivities of Eid-ul-Fitr, the Kashmir Bakers Confectioners Association (KBCA) has distributed more than 560 Eid bakery kits across various parts of the Valley during the holy month of Ramadan.

The distribution drive, carried out in three phases, reflects the Association's continued commitment to social welfare. By reaching hundreds of families, KBCA has reinforced its role as a socially responsible organization dedicated to community support, especially during

significant religious occasions. Speaking to the media, KBCA President Shahid Hussain Mir, accompanied by other office bearers, stated that the Association has always played an active role in social service. He highlighted that the organization's constitution encourages and permits members to extend support to the needy during challenging times, natural disasters, or major occasions like Eid.

Providing details, Mir said that this year's initiative saw an approximate 15 percent increase in distribution compared to last year. "A total of 560-plus bakery kits have been distributed in three phases, including 255 kits in the first



phase, 155 in the second and 150 in the third phase," he said.

He further noted that while the Association generally avoids

publicizing such charitable activities, the decision to high-

light this initiative was taken to inspire other sectors of society to come forward and contribute towards helping the underprivileged.

"Kashmiris have always been at the forefront of charitable and welfare activities—be it in healthcare, education, or during times of crisis," Mir said, urging people to actively participate in such initiatives to help build a stronger and more compassionate society.

On the occasion, he also advised bakery owners to maintain good behavior with customers, ensure the supply of quality products and strictly adhere to the guidelines set by authorities. He appealed to consumers to report any griev-

ances against Association members through the contact numbers provided below the official rate lists.

Among others present at the event were senior advisors Umar Mukhtar and Atta Mohammad, General Secretary Bilal Ahmad Khan, Senior Vice President Javid Ahmad Khan, Vice President Humayun Yousuf Jan, Additional General Secretary Ashiq Hussain Bhat, Treasurer Syed Ayoub Sofi and Organizer Ejaz Ahmad Sofi etc.

The Association reaffirmed its commitment to continuing such welfare initiatives in the future to extend maximum possible support to the needy sections of society.

DC Bandipora reviews Semi Ring Road works at Sumbal, Assesses subsidence in Hajin & Chandergir areas

Naninara Bridge alternate route to remain closed for one week

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, MAR 19: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, today conducted an extensive field visit to Wangipora Sumbal to inspect NHAI works, Naninara Bridge, Hajin and Chandergir areas to review ongoing works, assess ground conditions, and examine issues related to infrastructure and land subsidence.

During the visit to Wangipora Sumbal, the DC inspected the progress of works under the Semi Ring Road Phase II project being executed by NHAI. She took stock of on-site developments and reviewed bottlenecks affecting execution. It was informed that a major issue concerning a graveyard along the alignment has restricted the road width to two lanes at a particular stretch. The DC directed the concerned agencies to resolve the issue in coordination with stakeholders while ensuring minimal disruption to the project timeline. She also stressed the need for accelerating work by deploying adequate manpower and machinery and main-



taining close coordination among departments.

At Naninara Bridge, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the ongoing works and assessed the structural condition. Taking note of the prevailing weather condi-

tions and the sensitive nature of the works, she said that the alternate route will remain closed for all types of vehicular movement, including two-wheelers, for another one week. She appreciated the efforts of the R&B Sub-

Division Sumbal for their work, along with the support of SDM Sumbal and the District Administration.

On the occasion, the DC acknowledged the inconvenience faced by the public and appealed

for patience and cooperation, emphasizing that the quality and safety of the structure remain the top priority.

The DC also visited Hajin and Chandergir, where she inspected areas affected by land subsidence. She directed the concerned departments to carry out detailed assessments and ensure coordinated, time-bound measures to mitigate risks and safeguard affected areas. She reiterated the need for a long-term and sustainable solution to address the issue.

During her visit, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with local residents, listened to their concerns, and assured them of all possible support from the administration. She emphasized that public cooperation is essential for timely completion of works and effective resolution of ongoing issues.

The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Zaffar Hussain Shawl; Sub-Divisional Magistrate Sumbal, Executive Engineers, Tehsildar Sumbal and other concerned officers.

District Admin Bandipora organises Potential Entrepreneurship Mela under Mission YUVA

HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, MAR 19: District Administration Bandipora organized a one-day Potential Entrepreneurship Mela under Mission YUVA at GDC Sumbal.

During the mela, various departments including Handicrafts and Handloom, Agriculture, Animal and Sheep Husbandry, NRLM, DE&CC, J&K Bank and RSETI set up stalls to showcase schemes and provide on-the-spot guidance to aspiring entrepreneurs. Help desks and advisory counters were established



to facilitate interactions regarding credit facilities, training programmes, and institutional support.

Sanction letters were also distributed among applicants whose cases had been approved by the bank, marking a significant step towards facilitating entrepreneurship on the ground.

Successful entrepreneurs and members of Self Help Groups (SHGs) also participated in the event and shared their experiences, motivating aspiring youth to explore entrepreneurship as a viable career option.

The programme witnessed active participation from local youth, women entrepreneurs, officials, and other stakeholders.

DC Samba chairs Block Diwas at Purmandal, listens to public grievances

HT NEWS NETWORK

SAMBA, MAR 19: Deputy Commissioner Samba Ayushi Sudan chaired a Block Diwas programme at Mahajan Hall Panchayat Deon, Block Purmandal to address public grievances and review developmental issues of the area.

During the programme, a large number of residents projected their concerns and demands pertaining to road connectivity, water supply and other basic amenities. The Deputy Commissioner gave a patient hearing to all the issues and assured the public of prompt and effective redressal.

Taking serious note of the grievances, the DC directed the concerned departments to take immediate necessary action and ensure that all works are completed within the stipulated time-frame. She emphasized that any delay in execution of developmental works would not be tolerated and accountability would be fixed.

Stress was also laid on maintaining quality standards in all ongoing and upcoming projects. The Deputy Commissioner specifically instructed the executing agencies to ensure the use of quality materials in the construction of roads and other infrastructure works so as to ensure durability and public satisfaction.

While interacting with the locals, the DC encouraged them to explore self-employment opportunities and actively contribute towards the economic growth and development of their area. She highlighted the importance of community participation in achieving sustainable development.

Among others, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ACR), Ajay Bharti along with other senior officers of various departments, were present on the occasion.

GMC Srinagar sets benchmark with NABL Accreditation for Biochemistry Lab

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: In a major development, the Biochemistry Diagnostic Laboratory, Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar & Associated SMHS Hospital has secured accreditation from the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) in accordance with the international standard ISO 15189:2022.

NABL, a constituent board of the Quality Council of India, certifies laboratories for quality and technical competence, ensuring accurate and reliable diagnostic services.

The accreditation, granted for a period of four years till 2030 covers an extensive scope of routine and advanced biochemical and immunological investigations, including blood glucose, electrolytes, renal function tests, Liver Function Tests (LFT), Kidney Function Tests (KFT), glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c), lipid profile, thyroid function tests, enzyme assays, advanced hormone assays, tumor (cancer) markers, and other specialized parameters, all validated as per international standards.

Prof. Iffat Hassan, Principal/Dean, Govt Medical College Srinagar appreciated the efforts of the faculty and laboratory staff of the department of



Biochemistry and emphasized continued commitment to high-quality diagnostic services.

Head, Department of Biochemistry, Prof. Sabiya Majid stated that this is the first large Government sector laboratory in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir to achieve NABL accreditation of this scale and it reflects the dedicated teamwork of faculty and technical staff, making the laboratory a path-breaker in delivering quality diagnostic services in the region.

The Biochemistry Lab is a state-of-the-art fully automated facility equipped with advanced machinery, testing equipment, and robotic intervention, enabling it to conduct approximately 30 lakh tests annually with accuracy and efficiency. The lab's quality management system and technical competence were key factors in securing the accreditation.

GMC Srinagar reaffirms its commitment to maintaining and expanding its NABL-accredited scope in line with global best practices.

JMC launches citywide awareness drive, residents urged to clear water dues before March 31 deadline



HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 19: With the deadline for payment of water bills approaching on March 31, the Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation Dr. Devansh Yadav issued comprehensive directives to ensure maximum public participation in clearing pending dues and to

streamline the collection process across the city.

In line with these directions, the Jal Shakti Department particularly Divisions 1 and 2 functioning within the jurisdiction of JMC launched a widespread awareness and facilitation campaign. As part of this initiative, 12 dedicated camps have been established at various locations

across Jammu to educate residents about the importance of timely payment of water charges and to provide convenient on-the-spot payment facilities.

Under Division 1, camps have been set up at Roonagar, Dhonthli, Resham Ghar, Janipur and Hazuri Bagh. Similarly, under Division 2, camps are operational at Kunjwani, Trikuta Nagar,

Sainik Colony, Digiana Ashram, Channi Himmat, Channi Rama and Greater Kailash. These camps witnessed active participation from residents, with officials providing guidance, addressing queries and facilitating immediate bill payments.

The initiative aims not only to improve revenue realization but also to promote a sense of civic

responsibility among citizens regarding the maintenance and sustainability of essential water supply services. Officials highlighted that water dues amounting to nearly Rs. 30 crore are still pending across Jammu city, which significantly impacts the department's ability to maintain and upgrade infrastructure.

Appealing to the public, the department urged all consumers to take advantage of these camps and clear their outstanding dues well before the deadline to avoid last-minute inconvenience. The camps have been strategically located to ensure easy accessibility for residents from all parts of the city.

Providing further details, Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Department (Division 1) Tajinder Pal Singh said that strict action may be initiated against defaulters after the due date. He cautioned that non-payment of water charges could lead to disconnection of water supply connections and urged residents to act promptly.

7-Day Scientific Training for Beekeepers culminates at Agriculture Complex Lalmandi

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: Directorate of Agriculture Kashmir today successfully concluded a comprehensive seven-day training program on Scientific Beekeeping for beekeepers from the Kashmir Division.

The valedictory function was held at the Agriculture Complex, Lalmandi, Srinagar.

The training program, which commenced on March 13, 2026, was inaugurated by Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj Ahmad Shah. It was designed to promote beekeeping as a sustainable livelihood option and to equip participants, both existing and aspiring beekeepers, with modern, scientific techniques in apiculture.

The sessions covered critical topics including colony management, disease prevention and control, advanced honey extraction methods, value addition to hive products, and strategies to enhance pollination services for improved yields in horticultural and oilseed crops.

The program formed part of the department's broad-



er initiative to strengthen beekeeping practices across the Kashmir Valley, thereby boosting honey production, supporting rural employment, and contributing to agricultural sustainability through better pollination.

During the valedictory ceremony, Joint Director Inputs, Sohan Singh distributed certificates of participation among the enthusiastic beekeepers who successfully completed the training.

Participants shared their feedback, expressing gratitude to the Directorate of Agriculture Kashmir for organizing such an informative and practical program. They highlighted how the sessions provided valuable insights into scientific methods that would help them improve hive productivity, manage colonies more effectively, and increase their income through enhanced beekeeping practices.

The concluding event underscored the department's commitment to capacity building and empowering local beekeepers with knowledge aligned with contemporary apicultural advancements.

Satish Sharma leads intensive market checking drive across Jammu

Reiterates zero tolerance for black marketing, hoarding, overcharging

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 19: In a decisive move to safeguard consumer interests and ensure uninterrupted supply of essential commodities, Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA), IT, Transport, Youth Services & Sports, Satish Sharma today led an extensive and high-intensity market checking drive across multiple locations from Katra to Jammu, focusing particularly on the distribution and availability of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).
Demonstrating proactive governance and on-ground monitoring, the Minister conducted surprise inspections at several LPG godowns, distribution outlets, and retail points.

He thoroughly reviewed stock positions, distribution records, booking and delivery systems, and compliance with prescribed norms. He also interacted with consumers, delivery personnel, and distributors to get first-hand feedback regarding availability, pricing, and service delivery.
During the inspections, Satish Sharma issued a stern warning against black marketing, hoarding, overcharging, and any attempts to create artificial scarcity of LPG. He made it unequivocally clear that the government will adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards such malpractices.
"There will be no atonement for those found indulging in black marketing or exploiting consumers. Anyone violating



the law, be it an LPG distributor, delivery agent or any intermediary, will face strict legal action without exception," the Minister asserted.
Reiterating the government's commitment to transparency, accountability, and consumer protection, the Minister emphasized that ensuring the availability of LPG at regulated prices remains a top priority. He assured the public that there is adequate stock of LPG and that the government is closely monitoring the supply chain to prevent any disruption.
Satish Sharma further directed the concerned officers of the FCS&CA department to intensify market checking drives across all districts, maintain strict vigilance, and take immediate punitive action against

violators. He stressed the need for a robust monitoring mechanism, including regular inspections and real-time reporting, to curb any malpractice effectively. He instructed them to ensure continuous enforcement of regulations and strengthen coordination with law enforcement agencies to maintain discipline in the markets.
The Minister also called upon the general public to remain vigilant and report any instances of overcharging, hoarding, or denial of service. He assured that prompt action will be taken on all genuine complaints and strict penalties will be imposed on offenders.
Senior officers of the FCS&CA department and district administration accompanied the Minister during the drive.

Training on Phase-1 House-listing, Housing Census conducted in Reasi

HT NEWS NETWORK

REASI, MAR 19: A training programme for Phase-1 of the House-listing and Housing Census was organized in Reasi by Census officials. The session aimed to thoroughly train Charge Officers, Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) and their Census Clerks on all aspects of the upcoming first phase of Census operations.
The training covered critical components of the



House-listing and Housing Census, including preparation of the House-list, collection of data on housing conditions, household amenities, assets and infrastructure facilities. Participants were given hands-on guidance on the use of digital tools, mobile applications and the self-enumeration portal to ensure accurate, efficient and transparent data collection during the field operations.
The programme was graced by the presence of district officers, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR), Chief Planning Officer (CPO), District Statistics & Evaluation Officer (DSEO) and Accounts Officer to the Deputy Commissioner (AO to DC).
Census officials conducted detailed interactive sessions, practical demonstrations and addressed queries related to roles, responsibilities, timelines and quality control measures for Phase-1 operations. Emphasis was laid on achieving complete coverage, maintaining data integrity and adhering strictly to the prescribed schedules and guidelines.
Officials present reiterated the vital importance of the House-listing phase as the foundation for the entire Census process and urged all trainees to discharge their duties with dedication, accuracy and full coordination with field staff.

Army Spreads Love, Shares Iftar Meals With Orphan Children at Pattan

HT NEWS NETWORK

PATTAN, MAR 19: In a heartwarming gesture of compassion and community bonding, a grand Iftar party was organized by the army at Pattan, bringing together orphan children and senior Army officials in the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan.
The event was graced by the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Kilo Force Major General Tushar Sharma along with other senior Army officers, who spent meaningful and quality time with the children, sharing moments of joy and warmth during this holy month.
The Iftar gathering was aimed to spread love and affection among the orphaned children, making them feel valued and included. The Army officials interacted closely with the children, encouraging them towards a bright future and spreading smiles through conversations and shared meals.
Speaking on the occasion, the Army officials highlighted the importance of empathy, unity, and social responsibility, especially during Ramadan—a time that emphasizes charity and kindness.
The children expressed happiness and gratitude for the memorable evening, which not only provided them with a festive meal but also a sense of belonging and care.
Such initiatives continue to strengthen the bond between the Army and the local community, fostering goodwill and mutual respect across the region.

NIELIT organises Mega Job Fair at Jammu under Digital J&K Project of MeITY

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 19: The National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) Jammu on Wednesday organised a Mega Job Fair at Convention Centre, Canal Road here under the Digital J&K Project sponsored by Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITY).
During the fair, more than 500 vacancies across technical and marketing roles were offered for youth through the participation of over 20 reputed companies from IT services, electronics manufacturing, and allied industries. Speaking on the occasion, Joint Director & Officer Incharge, NIELIT Jammu, Rajneesh Raina highlighted the importance of the fair in bridging the gap



between industry requirements and skilled youth, while expressing gratitude to his dedicated team, trainers, and the hospitality and protocols department for their ground and background support in making the event a success.
Joint Director and Event Coor-

ordinator, Sarita Kaur in her address underlined the trust and enthusiasm shown by companies and candidates in the fair.
Placement Officer, Kanchan Koul noted that the initiative ensured transparent and merit-based recruitment, while as CGC Coordinator, Gopal Sharan observed that the Career Guidance & Counselling tie-up with NIELIT will strengthen industry-academia collaboration, ensuring structured guidance and placement support for students.
The event drew a large turnout of graduates, diploma holders, and skilled youth from across the Union Territory, reinforcing NIELIT Jammu's role in strengthening the skill ecosystem and aligning with the Government of India's vision of digital empowerment and inclusive growth.

DC Rajouri conducts surprise inspection; 35 domestic LPG cylinders seized for violations

HT NEWS NETWORK

RAJOURI, MAR 19: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, today conducted a surprise inspection across various market areas in the town to check irregularities and ensure strict enforcement of essential commodities regulations.
During the inspection, the team visited a gas agency and reviewed its functioning. Continuing the drive, the Deputy Commissioner directed officials to seize two LPG cylinders from a pizza shop at Salani Market for unauthorized usage.
At Mandi Chowk, three LPG cylinders were seized from a hotel operating under the name "Welcome Hotel" for similar violations. Further, one LPG cylinder was seized from Raju Sweet Shop during the inspection.
The Deputy Commissioner also conducted random market inspection, checking hygiene standards, rates and overall compliance with regulations. He strictly directed all commercial establishments not to use domestic LPG cylinders and warned that violations will invite



stringent action under the law.
Meanwhile, similar enforcement drives were conducted in different subdivisions of the district by Tehsildars under the supervision of respective ADCs. During these drives, 10 LPG cylinders were seized in Kotranka, 03 in Kalakote, 06 in Rajouri and 16 in other subdivisions. With this, the total number of LPG cylinders seized across the district has reached 35.
The district administration reiterated its commitment to enforcing regulations and urged all business establishments to adhere to prescribed norms, failing which strict action will be taken. The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by ADC Rajouri Chander Prakash, Assistant Director FCS&CA, Rohit Kumar; SHO Rajouri, Gaurav and other enforcement officials from concerned departments.

Market checking drives conducted across Ramban district

HT NEWS NETWORK

RAMBAN, MAR 19: In line with the directives of Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan, market checking drives were conducted by joint teams of various enforcement departments across the district to ensure adherence to quality standards and fair trade practices.
In view of the festivals, the drive is continuing across Ramban, a team led under the guidance of Tehsildar Ramban, Deep Kumar carried out intensive inspections of markets with special focus on edible and perishable items. The checking primarily covered fresh consumables including mutton, chicken, cheese and other essential food items.
During the inspection, the team verified the quality, hygiene, pricing and proper display of rate lists. Shopkeepers were directed to maintain cleanliness, ensure the sale of quality products and strictly adhere to the prescribed norms. Necessary instructions were also issued to avoid overcharging and hoarding of essential commodities.
The enforcement teams advised all traders to comply with the regulations and cooperate with the authorities in maintaining transparency and hygiene in the markets.

Market checking drive conducted in Bhandarwah ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr

HT NEWS NETWORK

BHANDARWAH, MAR 19: In view of the upcoming festival of Eid-ul-Fitr, a market checking drive was conducted across the entire Bhandarwah town under the supervision of Additional Deputy Commissioner Bhandarwah Sunil Bhutyal. The drive was carried out in the presence of the Naib Tehsildar, Tehsil Supply Officer (TSO), a team of Veterinary Doctors and representatives from the Municipal Committee.
During the inspection, various shops and business establishments were

checked to ensure the availability of essential commodities and to prevent overpricing and black marketing. Special attention was given to food items, sweets, meat and other daily-use products as the demand increases during the festive season. Shopkeepers were directed to display rate lists clearly and follow government-approved prices.
The Veterinary team inspected meat and poultry shops to ensure that only fresh and hygienic products are being sold. The Municipal team also checked

cleanliness and sanitation in the market areas to maintain a healthy environment for the public. Instructions were issued to maintain proper hygiene, avoid plastic waste and keep surroundings clean.
The drive aimed to protect consumer interests and ensure a smooth and safe shopping experience for the people. The administration has appealed to all traders to cooperate and maintain fairness so that the festival is celebrated in a safe and positive manner. Strict action will be taken against those found violating the rules.



HT EDITORIAL

Convert Rajbagh pedestrian bridge into a motorable one

The union territory government's plan to construct a motorable bridge across the river Jhelum connecting Rajbagh with the Polo View area has drawn flak from the environmentalists who say that the project will cause tremendous damage to the trees in the area. The government has maintained that the bridge would decongest the traffic in the Zero Bridge area and there would be less traffic snarls once the project is completed.

The government in its right to provide hassle free traffic to the people wants to construct the bridge but there are certain questions that need to be answered. There are already three bridges in the stretch from the Zero Bridge area to Lal Mandi and the construction of the fourth bridge would add to the chaos. The bridge near the Presentation Convent school that was thrown open during the PDP-BJP government was supposed to be a motorable bridge connecting the Rajbagh area with Polo View area.

When the project report for this bridge was envisaged, it was made out that the vehicles coming from the Lal Mandi side and bound for Lal Chowk area and some other areas would cross this bridge and they need not to go to the Zero Bridge as is being done at present. All the things were put in place for the same and it was expected that people would heave a sigh of relief once the bridge is thrown open.

For the reasons best known to the then works minister the motorable bridge was converted into a pedestrian bridge. Due to this last minute change, a bridge that was expected to ease the traffic congestion was converted into a pedestrian bridge and people continue to suffer on account of frequent traffic jams. The bridge was constructed at a whopping cost of eight crore rupees and its efficacy is almost zero when it comes to the end result. One fails to understand the wisdom of the minister since a huge amount was spent on a simple pedestrian bridge.

The present government should explore the option of converting the present pedestrian bridge into a motorable bridge. This can be done if efficient engineers are put to job and the decision is taken without any political consideration. Developmental projects need to be kept away from political considerations. Once this is done then only countries progress otherwise there would be tremendous damage to the ecology and environment.

The Drum That Woke My Ramadan



■ AFRREEN JAN

Some of my earliest memories of Ramadan in Kashmir are not of food or gatherings, but of a sound. A soft yet steady beat of a drum echoing through the quiet lanes before dawn.

As a child, I would often wake up to that sound while the valley was still wrapped in darkness. I remember lying in bed, half asleep, listening carefully as the rhythm slowly came closer to our street. It was Sahar Khan, walking through the neighbourhood to wake people up for Sehri.

My mother would already be in the kitchen, preparing the pre-dawn meal, while the lights in nearby houses began to turn on one after another. The peaceful silence of the night would slowly transform into a moment of life and warmth. For me, that drum was not just a sound it was the beginning of Ramadan every single day.

Back then, people did not rely on alarms or mobile phones. The voice and drum of Sahar Khan were enough to wake an entire community. His



presence in the early morning hours ensured that families would not miss the blessed meal before the fast.

Years have passed since those childhood mornings. Today, our phones can wake us up with alarms at any time. Technology has made

things easier, but somehow it has also made those moments feel different.

Yet whenever I hear the distant beat of a drum during Ramadan, it instantly takes me back to my childhood to those quiet mornings, glowing kitchen lights, and the comforting

feeling that Ramadan had begun.

For many Kashmiris, Sahar Khan is more than just a man with a drum. He is a living reminder of a tradition that connects generations and keeps the spirit of Ramadan alive in the valley.

Eid ul-Fitr: A Celebration of Faith, Compassion, and Renewal



■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF

Eid ul-Fitr stands as one of the most cherished occasions in the Islamic calendar, marking the completion of the holy month of Ramadan. It is a festival that carries deep spiritual meaning while also reflecting the social, cultural, and humanitarian values at the heart of Islam. Observed by millions of Muslims across the world, Eid ul-Fitr is not merely a celebration but a culmination of a transformative journey—one that nurtures self-discipline, compassion, and a renewed connection with faith.

At its core, Eid ul-Fitr symbolizes spiritual fulfillment. After a month of fasting from dawn to dusk, engaging in prayer, and practicing self-restraint, Muslims arrive at this day with a sense of accomplishment and humility. The fast during Ramadan is not limited to abstaining from food and drink; it extends to controlling one's thoughts, actions, and intentions. Eid, therefore, becomes a moment of reflection and gratitude—a day to acknowledge the strength gained through patience and devotion. It serves as a reminder that true success lies in self-improvement and sincerity in faith.

One of the most profound blessings of Eid ul-Fitr is the sense of unity it fosters. The day begins with a congregational prayer that brings communities together in large gatherings. People from diverse backgrounds stand side by side, united in their devotion and gratitude. In this moment, distinctions of wealth, status, and social hierarchy fade away, emphasizing the principle of equality that lies at the heart of Islamic teachings. This shared experience strengthens communal bonds and reinforces the idea that humanity is interconnected.

Charity and compassion form another essential pillar of Eid celebrations. The obligation of giving Zakat al-Fitr ensures that the less fortunate are included in the joy of the occasion. This act of giving is not merely a ritual but a powerful expression of empathy and social responsibility. It reminds individuals that their blessings are meant to be shared and that the well-being of society depends on collective care. In a world often marked by inequality, the spirit of Eid offers a meaningful lesson in generosity and inclusion.

Family and community relationships take center stage during Eid ul-Fitr. The day is marked by visits to relatives, gatherings with friends, and the sharing of meals. Homes are filled with laughter, warmth, and a sense of belonging. These interactions go beyond mere celebration; they serve as an opportunity to strengthen bonds, mend differences, and express love and appreciation. Eid encourages forgiveness and reconciliation, urging individuals



to let go of past grievances and build stronger, more harmonious relationships.

Gratitude is another defining aspect of Eid ul-Fitr. The experience of fasting is a deep appreciation for the blessings that are often taken for granted. The simple act of eating and drinking becomes a reminder of the blessings that sustain life. This awareness fosters a sense of humility and thankfulness, encouraging individuals to recognize the value of what they have. Eid reinforces the importance of maintaining this gratitude beyond the festival, shaping a more mindful and content outlook on life.

For children, Eid ul-Fitr is a time of joy, excitement, and wonder. The traditions of wearing new clothes, receiving gifts, and enjoying special treats create cherished memories that last a lifetime. The concept of Eidi, where elders give money or presents to younger members, adds to the festive spirit. However, beyond the material aspects, children are also introduced to the values that define Eid—kindness, sharing, and respect. These lessons play a crucial role in shaping their character and understanding of the world.

Eid ul-Fitr also embodies the spirit of renewal and forgiveness. The month of Ramadan is a period of introspection, where individuals seek forgiveness for their shortcomings and strive to become better versions of themselves. Eid represents a fresh start—a chance to move forward with a clean slate. It encourages people to forgive others, let go of resentment, and embrace a positive outlook. In a fast-paced world filled with stress and challenges, this message of renewal holds great significance.

Another important dimension of Eid is the balance it represents. While Ramadan emphasizes discipline, restraint, and spiritual focus, Eid celebrates joy, moderation, and the beauty of togetherness. It teaches that life is about maintaining equilibrium—balancing devotion with enjoyment, responsibility with celebration. This balance is essential for overall well-being, reminding individuals that happiness and faith are not mutually exclusive but deeply interconnected.

Cultural diversity adds richness to the celebration of Eid ul-Fitr. Across different regions, the festival is observed with unique traditions, cuisines, and customs. From sweet delicacies like sheer khurma and seviyan to savory dishes prepared for family

feasts, food plays a central role in bringing people together. Traditional attire, often worn with pride, reflects cultural heritage and adds to the festive atmosphere. Despite these variations, the underlying spirit of Eid remains the same, highlighting unity in diversity.

Eid ul-Fitr also promotes interfaith harmony and goodwill. In many communities, people of different faiths participate in the celebrations, exchanging greetings and sharing in the joy. Such interactions foster mutual respect and understanding, breaking down barriers and building bridges between diverse groups. In an increasingly interconnected world, these moments of shared happiness contribute to a more inclusive and peaceful society.

The lessons of Eid extend far beyond the day itself. The discipline, empathy, and generosity cultivated during Ramadan are meant to guide individuals throughout the year. Eid serves as a reminder to carry these values forward, integrating them into daily life. It encourages continuous self-reflection and growth, inspiring individuals to contribute positively to their communities and the world at large.

The economic impact of Eid ul-Fitr is also noteworthy. The festival often brings increased activity to markets, benefiting local businesses and artisans. From clothing and accessories to food and decorations, the demand for goods creates opportunities for economic growth. This aspect highlights how cultural and religious celebrations can have a broader societal impact, supporting livelihoods and fostering community development.

Moreover, Eid ul-Fitr provides an opportunity to pause and reflect on the importance of human connection. In the midst of busy routines and modern distractions, the festival reminds individuals to prioritize relationships and meaningful interactions. The simple act of visiting loved ones, sharing a meal, or offering a heartfelt greeting carries immense value. These moments strengthen the social fabric and create a sense of belonging that is essential for emotional well-being.

Ultimately, the blessings of Eid ul-Fitr are vast and multifaceted. It is a celebration that nurtures the soul, strengthens relationships, and inspires acts of kindness and generosity. It calls upon individuals to reflect on their journey, express gratitude for their blessings, and extend compassion to those around them. In doing so, it reinforces the values that form the foundation of a just and compassionate society.

As the day unfolds with prayers, gatherings, and acts of generosity, the true essence of Eid becomes evident. It is not merely a festival marked by celebration, but a profound expression of faith, unity, and humanity. Eid ul-Fitr serves as a reminder that even in a world filled with challenges, the principles of compassion, gratitude, and togetherness can guide us toward a better and more harmonious future.

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Ramzan Transcends Boundaries with Serene Rhythms of Life



■ DR. RATAN BHATTACHARJEE

The holy month of Ramzan in Kashmir arrives each year with a quiet transformation that transcends the boundaries of faith, politics, and long-standing conflict. In a region often defined in public discourse by its tensions and uncertainties, Ramzan introduces a different rhythm of life—one marked by introspection, restraint, generosity, and a renewed longing for peace. Amidst this spiritual atmosphere, an often-overlooked phenomenon emerges: a subtle yet deeply meaningful harmony between civilians and the military. This fragile but significant coexistence, visible in everyday gestures and shared moments, reveals how human values can momentarily soften even the most hardened divides.

During the blessed month of Ramzan, hearts are tested by hardship, yet softened by faith. Fasting is not only abstaining from food and drink but also cultivating compassion, patience, and humility. In days when life feels heavy, the softness of heart becomes a shield against bitterness. It reminds us to forgive, to extend kindness, and to see beyond our own struggles. Ramzan teaches that every pang of hunger is a lesson in empathy for those who suffer daily, and every moment of restraint is a chance to grow closer to Allah.

Softness of heart in hard days is not weakness—it is strength rooted in mercy. It allows believers to endure trials with dignity, to share what little they have, and to comfort others in their pain. In the silence of fasting, the heart learns to listen more deeply, to pray with sincerity, and to love with purity. Thus, Ramzan transforms hardship into an opportunity for spiritual renewal, reminding us that true resilience lies not in hardness but in tenderness, and that the soft heart is the one most receptive to divine light.

Kashmir's history has been shaped by decades of political unrest and military presence, which have inevitably influenced the relationship between civilians and security forces. Suspicion, fear, and occasional hostility have been part of this dynamic. Yet Ramzan creates a moral and emotional space where these tensions are, if not erased, at least eased. The essence of fasting—self-discipline, empathy for the less fortunate, and spiritual reflection—extends beyond the individual and begins to shape collective behavior. In such an environment, both civilians and soldiers often find themselves responding to a shared ethical call rooted in compassion and restraint. As dawn breaks over the Valley during Ramzan, the first act of the day—Sehri—sets the tone for quiet solidarity. In many areas, especially remote or sensitive zones, security personnel stationed far from their homes observe the fast alongside local residents. Though separated by uniforms and roles, they are united in their abstinence and devotion. It is not uncommon for local families to offer food or water to soldiers at Sehri or Iftar, small gestures that carry profound symbolic weight. These acts of kindness challenge the rigid binaries of "us" and "them," reminding both sides of a shared humanity that transcends institutional identities.

Iftar, the moment of breaking the fast at sunset, becomes particularly significant in fostering civil-military harmony. Across various parts of Kashmir, there have been instances where security forces organize community Iftar gatherings, inviting local residents to join them. These gatherings, often simple and unadorned, create a rare space for dialogue and mutual recognition. Sitting together on the same ground, sharing dates and water, civilians and soldiers momentarily step outside their prescribed roles. Conversations during these gatherings are rarely about politics or conflict; instead, they revolve around families, traditions, and the shared experience



of fasting. Such interactions, though limited in duration, help humanize both sides in each other's eyes.

Equally important is the change in conduct that Ramzan often inspires among security forces. Recognizing the sanctity of the month, many units adopt a more restrained and sensitive approach in their operations. Efforts are made to minimize disruptions during prayer times, especially during the evening Taraweeh prayers. Checkpoints, which are otherwise sites of tension, sometimes witness a softer demeanor, with personnel showing patience and understanding towards fasting civilians. This does not mean that security concerns disappear, but rather that they are managed with a heightened awareness of the spiritual context. For civilians, too, Ramzan encourages a spirit of patience and tolerance. The teachings associated with the fast emphasize controlling anger, avoiding confrontation, and practicing forgiveness. In a region where everyday life can be punctuated by stress and uncertainty, this spiritual discipline plays a crucial role in reducing friction. People are more likely to respond calmly at checkpoints, to cooperate when required, and to avoid unnecessary escalation. The mutual restraint exercised by both civilians and the military during this period contributes to a noticeable, if temporary, easing of tensions.

Religious institutions and local community leaders also play a significant role in nurturing this harmony. Mosques and clerics often emphasize the universal values of Islam—peace, compassion, and coexistence—during their sermons. They remind worshippers that Ramzan is not merely about abstaining from food and drink, but about cultivating a moral character that reflects kindness and respect towards all. Such messages resonate beyond the civilian population and indirectly influence the broader atmosphere, encouraging a more empathetic engagement between different groups.

In recent years, civil society organizations and youth groups in Kashmir have also contributed to building bridges during Ramzan. Volunteer initiatives such as distributing Iftar meals to the needy, organizing cleanliness drives, and providing assistance to travelers often involve coordination with local authorities, including the military. These collaborative efforts, though focused on humanitarian goals, create opportunities for positive interaction and trust-building. Young people, in particular, play a crucial role in redefining the narrative, demonstrating that cooperation is possible even in a complex socio-political environment.

The media, both local and national, has occasionally highlighted stories of compassion and cooperation during Ramzan in Kashmir. Reports of soldiers helping civilians, assisting the elderly during busy market hours, or ensuring the smooth conduct of religious gather-

Softness of heart in hard days is not weakness—it is strength rooted in mercy. It allows believers to endure trials with dignity, to share what little they have, and to comfort others in their pain. In the silence of fasting, the heart learns to listen more deeply, to pray with sincerity, and to love with purity. Thus, Ramzan transforms hardship into an opportunity for spiritual renewal, reminding us that true resilience lies not in hardness but in tenderness, and that the soft heart is the one most receptive to divine light

ings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the region. While such stories may not capture the entirety of the situation, they serve as important reminders that the relationship between civilians and the military is not solely defined by conflict. However, it is important to acknowledge that this harmony is delicate and often temporary. The structural realities of Kashmir's political situation do not disappear during Ramzan, and incidents of tension can still occur. The presence of the military remains a complex and sometimes contentious issue for many residents. Yet the significance of Ramzan lies precisely in its ability to create moments of pause—intervals during which alternative possibilities of coexistence can be glimpsed. These moments, though fleeting, have the potential to leave a lasting

impression on those who experience them.

The symbolism of fasting itself offers a powerful metaphor for this harmony. Just as individuals abstain from physical needs to attain spiritual growth, the collective restraint exercised by civilians and the military during Ramzan reflects a shared willingness to prioritize peace over provocation. This does not resolve underlying conflicts, but it does demonstrate that even in the most challenging circumstances, human beings are capable of choosing empathy over hostility. Women in Kashmir, often the silent anchors of family and community life, also contribute significantly to this atmosphere of harmony. Through their roles in preparing meals, organizing charitable activities, and nurturing values of compassion within their families, they help sustain the spirit of Ramzan. Their interactions with security personnel, whether through acts of kindness or simple gestures of acknowledgment, add another layer to the complex web of civil-military relations. Children, too, play an unintentional yet powerful role in bridging divides. Their innocence and lack of prejudice often lead to spontaneous interactions with soldiers—smiles, greetings, or playful exchanges that momentarily dissolve barriers. Such moments, though seemingly trivial, carry deep emotional significance, reminding adults on both sides of the possibility of a more harmonious future.

The markets of Kashmir during Ramzan present another vivid illustration of this coexistence. Bustling with activity as people prepare for Iftar and Eid, these spaces require careful coordination to ensure safety and order. Security forces often work discreetly to manage crowds and prevent disruptions, while civilians go about their routines with a sense of trust and cooperation. The shared goal of maintaining normalcy during this sacred time fosters a practical form of harmony that benefits everyone. As the month progresses towards Eid, the sense of anticipation and collective joy further strengthens this bond. The festival, marking the end of Ramzan, is a time of celebration, forgiveness, and renewal. In many instances, security personnel extend greetings to local residents, and these gestures are reciprocated. Though simple, such exchanges carry the weight of mutual recognition and respect.

Ultimately, civil and military harmony during Ramzan in Kashmir is not a grand or permanent resolution to the region's challenges. It is, rather, a series of small, meaningful interactions that collectively create a different narrative—one that emphasizes shared values over divisions. These interactions do not erase the past or eliminate the complexities of the present, but they offer a glimpse of what is possible when empathy, restraint, and mutual respect are allowed to guide human behavior. In a world often marked by polarization and conflict, the experience of Ramzan in

Kashmir serves as a quiet testament to the enduring power of spiritual and cultural traditions to foster understanding. It reminds us that even in the most difficult circumstances, there exist opportunities for connection and coexistence. The harmony observed during this sacred month may be temporary, but its impact can linger in the hearts and minds of those who experience it, planting the seeds for a more peaceful future.

The softness of the heart during Ramzan is also reflected in interpersonal relationships. People become more mindful of their words and actions, striving to avoid conflict and to maintain harmony. There is a conscious effort to repair broken relationships, to seek forgiveness, and to extend kindness even in challenging situations. This change is not superficial; it stems from a genuine desire to align one's behavior with the spiritual essence of the month. The heart, once guarded and defensive, becomes open and approachable, fostering deeper and more meaningful connections with others.

The impact of Ramzan on the heart is not limited to individual transformation; it extends to the broader community. The collective observance of fasting, prayer, and charity creates a shared sense of purpose and identity. Communities come together to support one another, whether through organizing communal Iftars, assisting those in need, or simply offering companionship and encouragement. This sense of solidarity strengthens social bonds and fosters a culture of empathy and cooperation. The softened hearts of individuals contribute to a more compassionate and harmonious society.

At its core, the softness of the heart in Ramzan is a return to the essential nature of human beings. Beneath the layers of ego, ambition, and distraction, there exists a natural inclination towards compassion, humility, and love. Ramzan provides the conditions necessary for this innate goodness to surface. It reminds individuals of what it means to be truly human—to feel deeply, to care sincerely, and to act with integrity and kindness. In a world often characterized by haste, competition, and emotional detachment, the experience of Ramzan offers a powerful counterbalance. It slows down the pace of life, encouraging reflection and mindfulness. It shifts the focus from accumulation to generosity, from self-interest to collective well-being. Most importantly, it transforms the heart, making it more receptive to the beauty and suffering of the world alike.

The softness that emerges during this sacred month is not an isolated phenomenon; it is a reflection of a deeper spiritual truth. When individuals align themselves with higher values and engage in acts of self-discipline and compassion, the heart naturally becomes more tender and responsive. This transformation, though subtle, has profound implications. It influences how individuals perceive themselves, how they relate to others, and how they navigate the complexities of life. Ultimately, the softness of the heart in Ramzan is both a gift and a responsibility. It is a gift because it allows individuals to experience a deeper, more meaningful connection with themselves and with others. It is a responsibility because it calls for the preservation and continuation of this state beyond the confines of the month. By nurturing this softness and allowing it to guide one's actions, individuals can contribute to a more compassionate and understanding world. In this way, Ramzan becomes more than a period of fasting; it becomes a journey of the heart—a journey that leads to greater awareness, deeper empathy, and a renewed commitment to the values that define our shared humanity.

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THE HEART BLOCKAGE

Coronary Artery Disease



DR. SURINDERPAL SINGH

Heart disease remains one of the leading causes of death across the globe, affecting millions of people every year. Among the many conditions associated with it, heart blockage, medically known as Coronary Artery Disease, is one of the most serious and widespread. It occurs when the arteries responsible for supplying oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle become narrowed or completely blocked. Understanding its causes, progression, symptoms, prevention, and treatment is crucial for maintaining a healthy heart and preventing life-threatening complications.

Heart blockage refers to the partial or complete obstruction of the coronary arteries. These arteries play a vital role in nourishing the heart muscle with oxygen and essential nutrients. The blockage usually develops due to a condition called atherosclerosis, in which fatty deposits known as plaque accumulate on the inner walls of the arteries. Over time, this buildup causes the arteries to narrow, restricting blood flow. When the blood supply to the heart is significantly reduced, it may result in chest pain, commonly known as angina, shortness of breath, irregular heart-beat, or even a heart attack. If left untreated, severe blockage can cause permanent damage to the heart muscle.

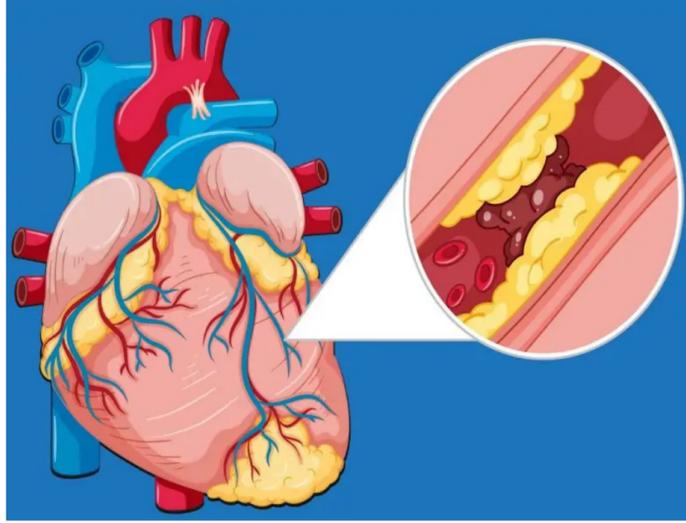
The development of heart blockage is typically a slow and progressive process that may take several years or even decades. It often begins with damage to the inner

lining of the arteries caused by unhealthy lifestyle habits or underlying diseases. This damage allows cholesterol, fats, and calcium to accumulate, forming plaques. As these plaques grow, they narrow the arteries and reduce blood flow. In some cases, a plaque may rupture, leading to the formation of a blood clot. If the clot completely blocks the artery, it can result in a heart attack.

Several biological and lifestyle-related factors contribute to the development of heart blockage. High cholesterol levels, particularly elevated LDL or "bad" cholesterol, play a major role in plaque formation. High blood pressure damages arterial walls, making them more susceptible to plaque buildup. Smoking further worsens the condition by reducing oxygen supply and damaging blood vessels. Diabetes also significantly increases the risk, as high blood sugar levels harm the arteries. Obesity, often linked with poor dietary habits and lack of exercise, contributes to increased cholesterol and blood pressure. Diets rich in saturated fats, trans fats, processed foods, and excessive sugar further accelerate the process. In addition, genetic factors can increase an individual's susceptibility, especially if there is a family history of heart disease.

Certain habits and conditions can trigger or accelerate the progression of heart blockage. A sedentary lifestyle reduces physical activity, leading to poor blood circulation and fat accumulation. Chronic stress elevates hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, which increase blood pressure and strain the heart. Excessive alcohol consumption raises triglyceride levels and blood pressure, while poor sleep patterns are increasingly recognized as a risk factor for cardiovascular diseases. Aging also plays a natural role, as arteries tend to stiffen and lose elasticity over time.

One of the most concerning aspects of



heart blockage is that it can develop silently without noticeable symptoms. Many individuals remain unaware of the condition until it becomes severe. Common warning signs include chest pain or pressure, pain radiating to the arm, neck, or jaw, shortness of breath, fatigue, dizziness, and sweating. However, in some cases, the first noticeable sign may be a sudden heart attack.

Modern medicine offers several effective methods to manage and treat heart blockage depending on its severity. Lifestyle modification is often the first and most important step, including adopting a healthy diet, engaging in regular physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, and managing stress. Medications are commonly prescribed to control cholesterol levels, regulate blood pressure, prevent

blood clotting, and relieve chest pain. In more advanced cases, medical procedures such as angioplasty are performed, where a small balloon is used to open the blocked artery. This is often followed by stent placement, where a metal mesh tube is inserted to keep the artery open. In severe cases, coronary artery bypass surgery may be required to create a new pathway for blood flow around the blocked artery.

Prevention remains the most effective strategy against heart blockage. A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and omega-3 fatty acids can significantly reduce risk. Avoiding excessive salt, fried foods, trans fats, and processed meats is equally important. Regular physical activity, such as walking, cycling, swimming, or yoga, for at least thirty minutes a day helps maintain cardiovascular health.

Maintaining a healthy body weight, quitting smoking, controlling blood pressure and diabetes, and undergoing regular health checkups are essential preventive measures.

There is often a misconception that physical exercise may increase heart blockage. In reality, regular exercise is one of the most effective ways to prevent it. It helps lower cholesterol, improve blood circulation, reduce blood pressure, and strengthen the heart muscle. However, individuals with existing severe blockage who are unaware of their condition may face risks if they suddenly engage in intense physical activity. For such individuals, sudden exertion may trigger a heart attack. Therefore, medical screening is advisable before beginning rigorous exercise programs, while moderate activities remain safe and beneficial for most people.

Advancements in medical science continue to offer hope in the fight against heart disease. Researchers are exploring the use of artificial intelligence in heart imaging for early detection, gene therapy to control cholesterol levels, advanced biodegradable stents, and personalized treatments based on genetic profiles. These innovations are expected to significantly improve both diagnosis and treatment in the future.

Heart blockage is a serious but largely preventable condition. It develops gradually due to a combination of lifestyle factors, underlying health conditions, and aging. Early detection, a healthy lifestyle, and regular physical activity can greatly reduce the risk. Increasing public awareness, encouraging preventive healthcare, and promoting regular medical screening are essential steps in reducing the global burden of heart disease.

The author is a Faculty in Science Department Sri Amritsar Sahib, Punjab

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BJP reviews organization across J&K, Sat Sharma calls for grassroots empowerment

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 19: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Jammu & Kashmir President and Rajya Sabha MP, Sat Sharma CA, along with BJP J&K General Secretary (Organization) Ashok Koul, addressed a crucial organizational meeting at the party headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

The meeting witnessed the presence of BJP J&K Vice Presidents Bharat Bhushan, Rakesh Mahajan, and Rekha Mahajan, General Secretary Gopal Mahajan, and other senior leaders.

The meeting focused on strengthening the party structure across Jammu & Kashmir, with special emphasis on booth-level consolidation, review of ongoing programmes, and strategizing for upcoming organizational and political ac-

tivities. A detailed and elaborate review of the ongoing Prashikshan Mahaabhiyan was also undertaken, assessing its outreach and effectiveness in training party cadre at multiple levels.

Addressing the meeting, Sat Sharma stressed the importance of a strong and active organizational network at the grassroots level. He stated that booth-level workers are the backbone of the party and their activism and training are key to ensuring the BJP's continued growth and public support in Jammu & Kashmir. He urged party leaders to ensure that every booth is strengthened with dedicated workers who remain connected with the public and actively highlight the public welfare initiatives of the government.

Sat Sharma further empha-



sized the need for effective communication of the developmental works and transformative policies being imple-

mented in Jammu & Kashmir, stating that the party must remain proactive in taking its achievements to the people.

He called for collective efforts to ensure the success of upcoming party programs and campaigns.

Ashok Koul, while addressing the meeting, laid strong emphasis on organizational discipline and systematic meth-

odology. He conducted a detailed review of the Prashikshan Mahaabhiyan, directing leaders to ensure maximum participation and effective execution at district and mandal levels. He highlighted that continuous training is essential to equip party workers with the skills and knowledge required to effectively engage with the public and strengthen the party's presence on the ground. Koul also reviewed the ongoing organizational activities and provided clear guidelines for upcoming programs, urging leaders to work with dedication, coordination, and a results-oriented approach.

The meeting concluded with a resolve to further intensify organizational efforts, ensuring a strong, proactive, and people-centric BJP across Jammu & Kashmir.

MIER College Organized Sensitization Programme on Waste Segregation

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 19: The Environment Unit of MIER College of Education (Autonomous) in collaboration with officials from the Jammu Municipal Corporation, organized an Orientation Programme on Waste Segregation for support staff and students to promote awareness about proper waste management practices on March 19, 2026. The programme aimed to create awareness about proper waste management practices and the importance of segregating biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste at the source. Prof. Nishtha Rana, Head SOE, Prof. Monika Bajaj, Head SSSH, IQAC team members and faculty members were present on the occasion and appreciated the initiative.

The orientation programme was conducted by Mr. Anoop Sharma, Sanitary Inspector, Jammu Municipal Corporation, along with the Swaha Team,



including Divya (Senior Executive), Sahil (Junior Executive), and Reetik (Junior Executive), who actively engaged the participants during the session. They demonstrated practical methods of waste segregation and highlighted the crucial role of individuals in maintaining cleanliness and promoting environmental sustainability. Participants were specifically guided to dispose of wet waste and dry waste in separate bins to ensure effective segregation at the source.

The initiative emphasized the need to adopt responsible environmental behaviour and encouraged participants to practice effective waste management not only within the college campus but also in their daily lives. Dr. Suman Gupta, Incharge of the Environment Unit, coordinated the programme and highlighted that such initiatives are essential in developing environmentally responsible habits among the college community.

Prof. Adit Gupta, Principal of MIER College of Education, appreciated the efforts of the Environment Unit for organizing this meaningful programme and promoting sustainable practices. He also stressed the importance of collective responsibility in maintaining a clean and healthy environment.

MLA Ramgarh Highlights Importance of Women Empowerment through NDA & Anmol Health Care Initiative

HT NEWS NETWORK

RAMGARH, MAR 19: In a significant move towards promoting women's self-reliance, MLA Ramgarh and Former Minister for Health and Medical Education, J&K, Dr Devinder Kumar Manyal, underscored the importance of skill-based programmes during a function at Village Diani. He highlighted that initiatives like these provide women with meaningful livelihood opportunities and help strengthen economic independence at the grassroots.

The programme was organized by the Nations Development Association (NDA) in collaboration with Anmol Health Care at Village Diani, AC Ramgarh, District Samba. As part of the initiative, Anmol Health Care contributed 10 sewing machines to support skill development and



employment generation for women in the area. Addressing the gathering,

Dr Manyal encouraged women to make the most of such initiatives, stressing that these pro-

grammes could pave the way for establishing centralized platforms for sustainable em-

ployment and skill enhancement.

Gopal Singh Jasrotia, Proprietor Anmol Health Care, praised the ongoing social work of Sushil Singh Charak and assured continued support for similar welfare programmes.

Sushil Singh Charak, Chief Functionary of Nations Development Association, expressed gratitude to Anmol Health Care and reaffirmed the organization's commitment to women empowerment and upliftment of underprivileged communities through skill-based initiatives.

The programme saw active participation from local residents, particularly women, who lauded the initiative and expressed optimism about future opportunities for self-employment and financial independence.

Youth need opportunities, not promises: Shamsher Chand

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 19: AICC Member and Bharat Yatri, Shamsher Chand, today made a strong appeal to both the Union Government and the Omar Abdullah-led National Conference Government to urgently address the growing concerns of youth in Jammu and Kashmir by ensuring their meaningful engagement and holistic development.

In a statement issued here, Shamsher Chand expressed serious concern over rising frustration among the youth due to unemployment, limited opportunities, and lack of constructive platforms to channel their energy. He emphasized that the future of J&K lies in empowering its young population and providing them with avenues that foster confidence, discipline, and growth.

He stressed the urgent need to

promote sports and games as a powerful tool for youth engagement, character building, and social cohesion. "Sports not only keep the youth physically fit but also instill values of teamwork, dedication, and resilience," he said, adding that a focused approach towards sports development can play a key role in steering young minds away from negativity.

Shamsher Chand called upon the government to develop modern sports infrastructure in both rural and urban areas of the Union Territory. He highlighted that while some progress has been made in select cities, vast rural pockets still lack basic playgrounds, training facilities, and coaching support. He urged the authorities to bridge this gap by establishing stadiums, indoor sports complexes, and community-level playfields accessible to all sections of society.

He further emphasized the importance of identifying and nurturing local talent at the grassroots level. "There is immense untapped potential among our youth, especially in far-flung areas. With proper guidance and facilities, they can excel at national and international levels," he added.

Reiterating his appeal, Shamsher Chand urged policymakers to adopt a comprehensive strategy that integrates sports with education and employment opportunities, ensuring a brighter and more secure future for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir. He concluded by calling for immediate and coordinated action to transform the aspirations of young people into tangible opportunities, stating that investing in youth today is the key to building a peaceful, progressive, and prosperous J&K.

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JKPCC Kissan Department Chairman greets people on Chaitra Navratri

Celebrate festival with devotion, compassion and a spirit of togetherness

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, MAR 19: Chairman of the JKPCC Kissan Department, Bharat Priye, has extended warm greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Chaitra Navratri. In his message, Bharat Priye said that Chaitra Navratri symbolizes the triumph of faith, positivity, and righteousness over negativity. He expressed hope that the festival would

bring peace, prosperity, and happiness to every household across the Union Territory. He emphasized that such sacred occasions strengthen the spirit of unity, harmony, and cultural heritage among the people.

Highlighting the significance of the festival in the context of J&K, he said that Navratri is a time for spiritual reflection as well as collective responsibility. He urged people, especially the youth, to draw inspiration from the

values of discipline, dedication, and resilience that the festival represents.

Focusing on farmers and rural communities, Bharat Priye stressed that the festival coincides with a crucial period in the agricultural cycle. He called for renewed attention towards the welfare of farmers, better support systems, and sustainable agricultural practices to ensure economic stability in rural areas. He added that strengthening the farming

sector is vital for the overall prosperity of J&K.

He also spoke about the challenges faced by the youth, including unemployment and limited opportunities, and stressed the need for inclusive policies that create avenues for growth, skill development, and entrepreneurship. He urged the government to prioritize employment generation and rural development so that young people can contribute meaningful

ly to society.

Bharat Priye further appealed to the people to celebrate the festival with devotion, compassion, and a spirit of togetherness, while also remembering the importance of social responsibility and mutual respect. He concluded by praying that the blessings of Goddess Durga bring strength, courage, and prosperity to all, and guide the region towards peace, progress, and inclusive development.

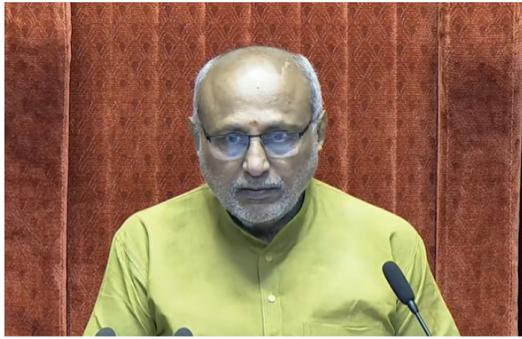
RS Chairman Radhakrishnan honours retiring members, highlights their enduring contributions

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: Rajya Sabha Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan on Wednesday presided over a farewell ceremony for 59 Members from 20 States who are set to retire between April and July this year, including nine women Members.

Speaking to the House, he emphasised that retirement should be seen not as an end, but as the beginning of new roles and responsibilities, and a celebration of the service rendered by Members during their tenure.

"Retirement should not be viewed as an end but as the beginning of new roles and responsibilities," Chairman Radhakrishnan said, noting that the constitutional provision for



the retirement of one-third of Members every two years ensures continuity while making space for new Members to contribute fresh ideas and insights.

Among those retiring are eminent leaders such as H.D. Deve Gowda, former Prime Minister of India, recognized for his longstanding commitment to

farmers and rural communities, and Mallikarjun Kharge, whose decades-long parliamentary career has made him a prominent voice in the House's deliberations. Special tribute was also paid to Hariyansh Narayan Singh, whose term ends on April 9. The Chairman lauded Singh's impartiality, dignity, and contributions to national and international parliamentary forums, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Chairman Radhakrishnan quoted a Tamil saying: "ceykaiyi / na maikalamma antumva um," meaning that good deeds live on beyond one's term, to underscore the lasting impact of the retiring Members' work. He highlighted

the contributions of women Members, the Panel of Vice-Chairpersons, and those who have served in executive and administrative capacities, noting that their insights and dedication have strengthened parliamentary debates and represented the aspirations of diverse regions and communities.

Acknowledging that some retiring Members have already been re-elected, he expressed hope that many more will return to continue enriching the House with their experience. Wishing them health, happiness, and success in future endeavors, Chairman Radhakrishnan emphasized that the legacy of their service will endure well beyond their tenure. UNI

Jairam Ramesh criticizes pension policies, calls for urgent reform

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Wednesday sharply criticized the social security policies of the Modi government, highlighting the weakening of pension and welfare schemes over the past 12 years.

"Over the past nearly 12 years of the Modi government's tenure, several social security schemes have gradually weakened, or have been deliberately weakened," Ramesh said in a post on handle X. "Even a basic facility like pensions has remained largely unchanged for a long time despite rising inflation," he said. Ramesh pointed out that this has had a direct impact on elderly and economically weaker pensioners, who are among the most vulnerable sections of society. "In the current period, when inflation is at its peak due to poor government policies, and the costs of healthcare and everyday essentials have risen sharply, a minimum EPF pension of Rs 1,000 is effectively a mockery," he added.

The leader cited the findings of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, which recently reported that the monthly pension of Rs 1,000 under the 1995 pension scheme is completely inadequate in today's context.

The committee recommended that the minimum pension be increased to a level that reflects the cost of living and ensures a dignified standard of life. "This is an issue related to the social security and dignified living of millions of retired workers," Ramesh said.

He also expressed hope that the government would respond to the committee's recommendations. "It is hoped that after this report by the Standing Committee on Labour, Textiles and Skill Development—headed by a Lok Sabha MP from the BJP—the government will take note and take concrete steps in this regard," he said. The comments come amid growing public concern over inflation and the rising cost of essential goods, which have placed additional strain on fixed-income pensioners across India.

Analysts note that reforming pension schemes has long been a contentious issue, with debates over adequacy, coverage, and the need to adjust benefits to current economic realities. UNI

Over 25 lakh officials deployed to oversee Assembly elections in four States and one UT: ECI

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: The Election Commission of India has deployed more than 25 lakh personnel to conduct upcoming Assembly elections across four states and one union Territory, aiming to ensure "violence-free and inducement-free" polling, the poll panel said in a press note on Wednesday.

The poll panel had on March 15 announced the schedule for elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry, along with bypolls in six other states. According to the Commission, over 17.4 crore voters are eligible to cast their ballots in these elections, translating to roughly one election official for every 70 electors. Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said officials have been instructed to maintain strict neutrality throughout the process.

"They have been directed to act with complete impartiality to ensure that the elections are violence-free and inducement-free so that each elector votes without fear or favour," he had said while announcing the poll schedule. The extensive deployment includes nearly 15 lakh polling personnel, 8.5 lakh security personnel, about 40,000 counting staff, 49,000 micro observers, 21,000 sector officers and an additional 15,000 micro-observers for counting duties. The Commission said this large-scale mobilisation is aimed at ensuring smooth conduct across all phases of voting. In addition, over 2.18 lakh Booth Level Officers (BLOs) have been positioned as the primary interface for voters, accessible via phone and through the ECINet mobile application's "Book-a-call to BLO" feature. A dedicated helpline, 1950, has also been made available for voters to register complaints or seek information at the district and returning officer levels.

The Commission noted that all deployed personnel will be deemed to be on deputation to it under Section 28A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, reinforcing its authority over election duties during the process. To further strengthen oversight, 1,111 central observers have been appointed across 832 Assembly constituencies. These include 557 general observers, 188 police observers and 366 expenditure observers. Most of them have already reached their assigned constituencies and will function as the "eyes and ears" of the Commission on the ground.

The observers are expected to interact regularly with candidates, political parties and members of the public to address election-related grievances at designated times each day, as part of efforts to enhance transparency and accountability in the electoral process. The multi-phase elections are among the largest democratic exercises in the country, with the Election Commission emphasizing preparedness, accessibility and strict enforcement of norms to uphold the integrity of the voting process. UNI

Indian Navy leads IOS SAGAR exercise with participation from 16 nations

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: Reaffirming India's commitment to fostering cooperative maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the second edition of Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR has commenced with enhanced regional participation. Following the Indian Navy's assumption of the chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium in February 2026, this edition marks a significant step in strengthening collective maritime engagement. Reflecting this expanded outreach, the initiative brings together participation from 16 IONS member nations across the IOR, underscoring

a shared commitment to security, stability and cooperation at sea.

In a statement issued here today, the Naval spokesperson said that the second edition was launched on March 16. The initiative builds on India's long-standing maritime cooperation efforts and reflects the Government of India's vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), while also advancing the broader framework of MAHASAGAR – Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across the Regions. IOS SAGAR, designed as a unique operational engagement programme that enables naval personnel from Friendly Foreign Countries to train and sail together

onboard an Indian Naval Ship. By integrating international participants into shipboard activities and professional training modules, the initiative promotes practical cooperation, interoperability and shared understanding of maritime operations, the spokesperson added.

As part of the current edition of IOS SAGAR, naval personnel from 16 Friendly Foreign Countries will participate in the programme. The programme will commence with professional training interactions at Indian Naval training establishments in Kochi, where participants will be exposed to key aspects of naval operations, seamanship practices.

GST 2.0: Tax cuts, but no significant decrease in grocery bills

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: When India introduced its overhaul of GST after September, the promise was simple: cut taxes, lower prices, boost spending. Six months later, this idea seems to have fallen apart. Instead, we see a more uneven and, in some ways, uncomfortable reality. The benefits of tax cuts appear to favour big-ticket items more than the everyday essentials that fill most household budgets. Early pricing data doesn't show widespread drops in costs. In fact, it suggests a divided situation. Essentials like food, personal care items, and small household goods have mostly increased in price. On the other hand, discretionary items such as cars, appliances, and air conditioners have dropped in price. This shift quietly affects who truly benefits from the reform.

A recent paper from the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), written by Sachidananda Mukherjee and Shivani Badola, clearly shows this divide. Even with significant cuts in tax rates, the impact on retail prices has not been consistent. In many cases, it has been partial, slow, and heavily influenced by the product type.

Thereform itself was substantial. Starting September 22, 2025, the GST system changed from four tax tiers—5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent, and 28 per cent—to a simpler three-tier system of 5 per cent, 18 per cent, and 40 per cent. Many items moved into the lowest 5 per cent category; the count expanded from fewer than 40 to over 100 after the change. This should have led to noticeable price drops across a wide range of goods.

However, the consumer price index shows a different reality. Take food, which is a crucial expense for most households. Instead of going down, prices for many categories have climbed. Milk, ghee, and paneer—key items for urban and semi-urban consumers—have all seen gradual increases. Processed foods like chocolates, noodles, and spice mixes have also become slightly more expensive since the tax cuts. Even dry fruits and nuts, which are already costly, have recorded sharper price hikes.

What stands out is not the size of each price increase—most are small—but the trend. Normally, when taxes go down, prices should drop too. Instead, we're mostly seeing prices rise.

There are exceptions, but they're few. Items like biscuits and butter have seen slight price drops, but these reductions do not offset the overall trend in food pricing. Most shoppers have not noticed a significant decrease in their weekly grocery bills.

This pattern continues beyond food. In personal care and household products, prices have also crept up. For example, hair oils and colouring products have experienced sharper increases despite being moved to lower tax slabs. Shampoos, skincare products, toothpaste, and soaps—all daily necessities—have seen small rises, which add up over time and impact household budgets.

As we look at household goods and furniture, the situation becomes more complex. Many items like furniture, bedding, and utensils have seen modest price increases. However, there is a clear contrast: certain high-value durable goods have become significantly cheaper.

Air conditioners illustrate this well. Their prices have dropped notably, reflecting both the tax cuts and competitive market pressures. Cooking appliances and some other durable goods have also become more affordable. But

the starkest difference is in transportation.

Cars and motorcycles have experienced some of the largest price drops. Vehicles that were taxed at higher rates now show a better pass-through of tax cuts into final prices. For consumers shopping for these items, the benefits are clear and immediate.

Yet, this also highlights deeper inequalities. The same system that struggles to provide visible price relief for milk or soap seems much more effective at lowering car prices.

Interestingly, the opposite is true, too. Where tax rates have gone up, price adjustments happen quickly. Airfares, for instance, have shot up, showing that when market conditions permit, companies can pass on higher costs as swiftly as they can lower prices from tax cuts.

Clothing presents another example of rising prices. As tax brackets widen, many clothing items have seen significant price hikes. Even healthcare, which might benefit from streamlined taxes, has not enjoyed much relief. Medicine prices have increased, although some medical devices have become slightly cheaper. All of these trends point to a

larger, structural issue. Tax cuts do not automatically lead to lower prices, especially in areas where demand is less flexible. For essential goods, consumers cannot easily reduce their purchases. This diminishes the pressure on producers to lower prices following tax savings. Instead, these benefits might be absorbed into profit margins or offset by rising costs, such as materials or logistics.

In contrast, markets for discretionary goods are more competitive and sensitive to price changes. A tax reduction can directly affect demand, causing companies to quickly adjust prices to increase sales. This difference helps explain why the benefits of GST 2.0 seem more apparent in showrooms than in grocery stores.

What results is a kind of two-speed adjustment. Prices in high-value, optional categories respond quickly. Prices in essential categories move slowly, if they move at all—and sometimes go up instead.

The NIPFP study, which looks at CPI data for 355 items from May 2025 to January 2026, acknowledges that the timeframe is still brief. Price adjustments can take time, especially in areas with complex supply chains or existing inventory.

Burglar who stole induction cooktop amid LPG shortage held by Delhi Police

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 19: A burglar who stole an induction cooktop amid the ongoing LPG shortage was held from South-West Delhi, officials said on Wednesday.

According to police, the accused was apprehended by the Anti-Burglary Cell team of the South-West District in connection with a burglary case registered at Palam Village police station. The case was lodged on March 6 following a complaint regarding theft of a laptop and other household items.

DCP South-West Amit Goel said that the accused was identified as Biki Chaudhary, a native of Kolkata, West Bengal, presently residing in Gurugram, Haryana.

Police recovered stolen items from his possession, including a Milton induction cooktop, a pair of Red Tape shoes, and clothes. During interrogation, the accused



confessed to his involvement in the crime.

Officials said a dedicated team conducted CCTV analysis and developed technical inputs to track down the suspect before successfully apprehending him.

Further investigation in the case is underway.

Delhi High Court nullifies ICAI move to vacate council seat over invalid meeting

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: In a significant ruling, the Delhi High Court has overturned a decision by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India to declare a regional council seat vacant, underscoring that procedural lapses in convening meetings cannot be used to trigger automatic disqualification.

The dispute arose when Gaurav Aggrawal, an elected member of the Northern India Regional Council for the 2025–2029 term, was informed on November 6, 2025 that he had lost his seat. The ICAI invoked Regulation 135(3) of the Chartered Accountants Regulations, 1988, which mandates that a member "shall be deemed to vacate" their position if they miss three consecutive

meetings without obtaining leave.

Aggrawal challenged this move, arguing that several meetings cited as the basis for his absence, held during April and May 2025, were themselves procedurally flawed. At the heart of the matter was whether those meetings had been convened in compliance with the rules governing notice.

The court acknowledged that the regulation creates what it described as a "deeming fiction," meaning the vacancy occurs automatically without any requirement for prior hearing or adjudication.

"The deemed vacation of the seat... is not dependent upon any adjudication," the court observed, rejecting the argument that the absence of a hearing invalidated

the action.

However, the bench, led by Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav, drew a crucial distinction: automatic consequences can only follow from validly convened meetings. Examining Regulation 142, the court reiterated that a minimum of fourteen days' notice is the norm for council meetings, and any deviation requires strict compliance with specified safeguards, such as approval from key office-bearers or the consent of members.

In this case, the court found that those safeguards were not met. The 70th meeting, held on April 15, 2025, had been convened on short notice without adequate approval. Only eight out of eighteen members had agreed, falling short of the required threshold. As a result, the meeting

itself was declared invalid.

Justice Kaurav stated, "The 70th meeting dated 15.04.2025 is hereby declared as having been convened without proper notice."

He further concluded that the ICAI's communication declaring Aggrawal's seat vacant, along with a subsequent meeting notice issued the same day, could not stand in law.

Because this invalid meeting formed part of the sequence used to establish three consecutive absences, the very basis for invoking automatic vacation collapsed.

The court ultimately set aside the ICAI's decision, reinforcing that even where rules provide for automatic consequences, those consequences must rest on a procedurally sound foundation.

CCEA approves Rs.6,969 cr Highway project to boost connectivity between Barabanki and Bahraich

CCEA approves Rs 1,718.56 cr MSP support for cotton farmers

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: In a major push to strengthen road infrastructure and regional connectivity, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday approved the construction of a four-lane access-controlled National Highway-927 from Barabanki to Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh at a cost of Rs 6,969.04 crore.

The 101.515-km project will be developed under the Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM), Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said while briefing the media on the Cabinet's decisions.

"The project will significantly improve connectivity, reduce travel time, and enhance road safety in the region," Vaishnav said, noting that the upgraded corridor is expected to cut travel time between Barabanki and Bahraich to about one hour.

He added that the development would also improve fuel efficiency and reduce vehicle operating costs, delivering broad economic benefits.

The existing Barabanki-Bahraich stretch has long been



affected by sharp curves, geometric deficiencies, and congestion in built-up areas across both districts. The new access-controlled highway, along with continuous service roads, is designed to bypass major habitations, ensuring smoother traffic flow and safer travel conditions.

The minister said the project

will play a crucial role in enhancing connectivity to key economic, social, and logistics nodes across Uttar Pradesh.

The corridor will link three economic nodes, two social nodes, and twelve logistics nodes, strengthening multimodal integration in the region. It will also improve access to important

transport infrastructure, including the strategically significant Rupaiddiha Land Port and nearby airports.

Once completed, the highway is expected to emerge as a vital cross-border trade and transit route between India and Nepal via the Nepalganj border. This improved connectivity will facilitate faster movement of goods and passengers, boosting trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

The project is also expected to benefit remote and underdeveloped regions, particularly districts like Bahraich district and Shrawasti district, by improving accessibility and encouraging investment. By supporting agricultural trade, tourism, and cross-border commerce, the highway is likely to contribute to broader socio-economic development in the region.

Aligned with the government's PM GatiShakti initiative, the project underscores a continued focus on integrated infrastructure planning aimed at accelerating growth, improving logistics efficiency, and strengthening regional economies. UNI

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday approved Minimum Support Price (MSP) funding of Rs 1,718.56 crore to the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) for the 2023-24 cotton season.

Announcing the decision, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said the allocation is intended to provide direct price support to farmers and protect them from market volatility.

"The MSP operations are designed to safeguard the interests of cotton farmers, especially when market prices fall below the support price," Vaishnav said, adding that the intervention ensures stability in cotton prices and prevents distress sales.

He noted that the move will help guarantee remunerative returns and strengthen the economic security of cotton-growing communities across the country.

Cotton, one of India's most important cash crops, plays a critical role in the rural economy, supporting nearly 60 lakh farmers and providing livelihoods to an estimated 400-500 lakh people involved in allied sectors such as processing, trade, and textiles. During the 2023-24 season, the crop was cultivated over approximately 114.47 lakh hectares, with production estimated at 325.22 lakh bales—around a quarter of global cotton output.

The MSP for seed cotton (kapas) is fixed

annually by the government based on recommendations from the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

The Cotton Corporation of India has been designated as the central nodal agency to carry out procurement operations. It purchases all Fair Average Quality (FAQ) cotton offered by farmers without any quantitative limit whenever market prices dip below MSP, thereby providing a reliable safety net.

Highlighting the preparedness for the ongoing season, Vaishnav said that CCI has established an extensive procurement network spanning all 11 major cotton-growing states. "With more than 508 procurement centres across 152 districts, the system ensures that farmers have easy and timely access to MSP operations," he said.

The government has also introduced several technology-driven initiatives to improve transparency and efficiency in procurement. These include the Bale Identification and Traceability System (BITS) and the "Cott-Ally" mobile application, which help disseminate MSP-related information and enhance service delivery to farmers.

Officials said the MSP support will not only stabilise farmer incomes but also encourage sustained interest in cotton cultivation, contributing to India's broader goal of achieving self-reliance in quality cotton production. UNI

Beats and Nike unveil historic first-ever collaboration for Powerbeats Pro 2

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 19: Beats and Nike announced the first hardware collaboration in their shared history: Powerbeats Pro 2- Nike Special Edition. In a landmark design shift, Beats has- for the first time- shared its iconic earbud real estate with a partner, featuring the Nike Swoosh on the right bud and the signature Beats "b" on the left.

The limited-edition release marries Nike's high-energy 'Volt' color palette with the industry-leading audio tech of the Powerbeats Pro 2. The result is a performance tool built to bridge the gap between elite sport and street style.

The Nike Special Edition arrives in a striking matte black, Volt-speckled charging case. Upon opening, users are greeted by Nike's "JUST DO IT" mantra printed inside the lid. While the aesthetic is new, the internals are pure power:

Pro-Level Sound: Adaptive Active Noise Cancelling (ANC) and Transparency mode

Biometric Integration: Built-in Heart Rate Monitoring that syncs seamlessly with the Fitness app and Nike Run Club1

Athlete Endurance: Up to 45 hours of battery life with the charging case and IPX4-rated sweat and water resistance2

Secure Fit: Signature wrap-around earhooks designed to stay put from the weight room to the 18th green

"This isn't just a new colorway; it's a collision of two brands that define performance, culture, and sports- the attributes of today's athlete," said Chris Thorne, CMO of Beats. "By placing the Swoosh on our hardware for the first time, we're honoring the shared DNA of Beats and Nike- and celebrating ambassadors like LeBron James who embody both. It's a tribute to the grit, style, and sound that push people to their limits."

To accompany the launch, Beats tapped longtime brand ambassador LeBron James for a comedic campaign that proves you don't need to be perfect to play. In "Keep Your Head in The Game," James hits the green with less-than-elite golf skills- but with Powerbeats Pro 2, he tunes out the critics (played by professional golfer Tom Kim and actors Lionel Boyce and Travis "Taco" Bennett) and embraces the game on his own terms. Watch it here.

"When two iconic brands like Beats and Nike come together, it's more than a collaboration- for me, it's family," said LeBron James. "I've been part of the Beats journey since day one with the original Powerbeats, and the Powerbeats Pro 2 represent everything I need in my daily routine, whether I'm training, recovering, or just living life. These aren't just my go-to earbuds- they're built for anyone who refuses to compromise on performance."

Cabinet approves Rs 2,584 cr small Hydro Power scheme to boost clean energy and rural development

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: The union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the 'Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme' for the period FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31, with a total outlay of Rs.2,584.60 crore.

Announcing the decision, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said the scheme aims to facilitate the installation of small hydro power projects with an estimated capacity of 1,500 MW across the country.

"The scheme will accelerate the development of small hydro projects, particularly in remote and hilly regions, while contributing to India's clean energy goals," Vaishnav said, adding that it would also generate employment and promote investment in rural areas.

The scheme targets projects with capacities ranging from 1 MW to 25 MW and is expected to

benefit states with high hydro potential, especially those in the North Eastern region and other hilly areas. To encourage development in these regions, the government has proposed higher central financial assistance for projects located in the North-Eastern states and districts along international borders.

These projects will be eligible for support of up to Rs 3.6 crore per MW or 30 percent of the project cost, subject to a maximum of Rs 30 crore per project. For projects in other states, assistance will be capped at Rs 2.4 crore per MW or 20 percent of the project cost, with a maximum limit of Rs 20 crore per project.

Out of the total allocation, Rs 2,532 crore has been earmarked for the implementation of SHP projects. Officials said the scheme is expected to attract investments worth around Rs 15,000 crore in the sector, providing a major boost



to clean energy initiatives while ensuring that all plant and machinery are sourced domestically, in line with the government's Atmanirbhar Bharat vision.

In addition to project funding, the scheme also focuses on building a future pipeline of hydro projects by supporting the preparation of detailed project reports (DPRs). Around Rs 30 crore has been allocated to assist central and state

agencies in preparing DPRs for nearly 200 potential projects.

The government estimates that the scheme will generate approximately 51 lakh person-days of employment during the construction phase, along with additional long-term jobs in operations and maintenance. Since small hydro projects are decentralized and typically located near consumption centres, they

require minimal transmission infrastructure, thereby reducing transmission losses and improving efficiency.

Highlighting the environmental advantages, Vaishnav said that small hydro projects are inherently sustainable, as they avoid large-scale land acquisition, deforestation, and the displacement of communities. "These projects will not only strengthen India's renewable energy portfolio but also promote socio-economic development in remote regions by creating durable infrastructure and long-term employment opportunities," he noted.

With project lifespans ranging from 40 to over 60 years, the scheme is expected to revitalise the small hydro sector and enable faster utilisation of the country's untapped hydro potential, while advancing India's transition towards a cleaner and more self-reliant energy future. UNI

Developing nations need strong WTO as trade uncertainty rises: UNCTAD

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 19: The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on Wednesday said that a robust and reformed World Trade Organization (WTO) is critical for developing countries, cautioning that rising uncertainty in global trade rules could undermine decades of economic progress. In its latest Global Trade Update, UNCTAD said developing economies have the "greatest developmental stake" in a well-functioning multilateral trading system as it ensures stable and predictable

market access essential for growth.

"Over the past 20-plus years, trade has been a central driver of economic expansion for many developing countries," the report noted, adding that integration into global markets has enabled investment flows, technology diffusion, job creation and a shift towards higher-value activities.

The report highlighted that the multilateral trading system has historically reduced discrimination in trade and supported global economic expansion through a framework of agreed rules. However, it warned that this predictability is

weakening, with "long-term certainty giving way to persistent policy volatility" as countries increasingly use trade measures driven by industrial policy, national security and geopolitical considerations.

UNCTAD pointed out that for smaller and vulnerable economies, trade is indispensable since domestic markets alone are insufficient to sustain robust growth. "The smaller the economy, the more crucial trade becomes," it said, underlining that a rules-based system provides the certainty needed for export-led growth and integration into global value chains.

Stock market extends rally for third consecutive session

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MAR 19: Indian stock markets extended their rally for a third consecutive session on Wednesday, with the Nifty crossing the 23,850 mark, supported by broad-based buying across most sectors. At close, the Sensex was up 633.29 points, or 0.83 percent, at 76,704.13, while the Nifty rose 196.65 points, or 0.83 percent, to 23,777.80.

Broader markets also outperformed, with the Nifty Midcap 100 gaining 2 percent and the Nifty Smallcap 100 rising 1.6 percent. The total market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies increased to over Rs 443 lakh crore from Rs 438 lakh crore earlier.

Among sectors, all indices ended higher except FMCG and metal. Key sectors, including realty, IT, auto, media, capital goods, consumer durables, telecom, and infrastructure, rose in the range of 1 to 3 percent.

On the Nifty, key gainers included Jio Financial, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Eternal, and M&M, while losers were Coal India, NTPC, HUL, Cipla, and Sun Pharma. More than 200 stocks touched their 52-week lows on the BSE. These included Gujarat State Petro, Cipla, Tata Chemicals, Gujarat Gas, Honeywell Automation, and Procter and Gamble Hygiene and Health Care, among others.

The Indian rupee also registered a sharp fall against the US dollar, breaching the 92.50 mark for the first time and settling at a record closing low of 92.63.

IT stocks witnessed a sharp rebound during the session, with key players such as Infosys and HCL Technologies rising over 4 percent, while Tata Consultancy Services and Wipro gained 3.6 percent and 3.17 percent, respectively.

Among pharma stocks, Mankind Pharma rose 1.7 percent after acquiring the Rivotril brand for India, while Strides Pharma Science gained 3 percent after entering into agreements with Sandoz AG, Switzerland.

In Asian markets, Japan's Nikkei 225 surged 2.9 percent to 55,239.40 following stronger-than-expected export data for February, while South Korea's Kospi jumped 5 percent to 5,925.03. UNI

401M organic views highlight creator-driven Insta surge during India vs Pakistan match at T20 World Cup 2026: KlugKlug

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 19: The India vs Pakistan clash at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 once again underlined the dynamics of digital engagement in India, where culture, not campaigns, drives scale. KlugKlug's analysis of Instagram activity between February 12 and February 18, tracking hashtags #indvspak, #indiavspakistan, and the keyword indvspak, revealed a massive spike in non-sponsored creator activity. The data shows that 12.87K influencers created 20.82K posts, collectively generating 401.2 million views.

While the scale of reach is significant, the real insight lies in the nature and timing of engagement. Nearly 70 per cent of total engagement was concentrated on a single day, February 15, the match day itself, when close to 9,000 creators published over 13,000 posts in just 24 hours. This wasn't passive consumption. Audiences were reacting, joking, celebrating, and venting in real time, turning the match into a shared digital experience. The spike reflects a high-intensity, emotionally charged attention environment, where content thrives not because it is planned, but because it is felt.

Interestingly, it wasn't celebrity influencers driving this momentum. The real engine of engagement was nano influencers, everyday creators with fewer than 10,000 followers. Nearly 10,000 such creators contributed to the conversation, delivering an exceptional average engagement rate of 43 per cent. This highlights the power of authentic, community-led conversations, where real fans speak to real fans without the filter of paid promotion.

Micro and macro influencers helped expand reach, while mega influencers added star power. But the heart of the conversation firmly belonged to smaller creators who

captured the pulse of the moment. Despite this unprecedented surge, brand participation remained limited. Most brands continue to approach influencer marketing through structured campaigns, selecting creators and negotiating deliverables, but often miss the need to pick the right cultural moments, where real-time relevance and emotion can amplify both engagement and business impact. However, the India-Pakistan match demonstrated that the most powerful conversations are unplanned and organic, emerging when culture and emotion collide. Fans were already creating, sharing, and engaging at scale. The stadium

was packed, social media was buzzing, but brands were largely absent from the most relevant moments.

Conclusion KlugKlug's findings highlight that the India vs Pakistan rivalry is not just a sporting event; it is a cultural phenomenon capable of uniting millions in a single, shared moment of emotion.

For brands, the takeaway is clear: the future of influencer marketing lies beyond follower counts and campaign calendars. The real opportunity is in showing up when it matters most, when conversations are already alive, and emotions are running high.

Varun, Narine KKR's Cannons at Eden: Du Plessis

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: An underwhelming T20 World Cup campaign notwithstanding, Indian mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy would be crucial for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL beginning on March 28, former South African captain Faf du Plessis has said.

Du Plessis, who played for Chennai Super kings, Delhi Capitals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru before retiring from the tournament, told 'JioHotStar' that the Eden Gardens pitch should be tailored for Sunil Narine and Chakravarthy.

"If I was part of the KKR team management, I would ask the groundsman at Eden Gardens to make the wicket spin-friendly. KKR are blessed to have two absolute cannons in Varun Chakravarthy and Sunil Narine," he said.

"They are two of the best T20 spinners in the game right now. Both, Varun and Narine, have to be in the game. If they play on surfaces where they are not in contention, then you are losing those two cannons and your superpower."

"Yes, they can bowl well on any wicket and trouble batters. But for KKR to be successful this IPL, Varun and Narine need to fire. The pitch should be prepared keeping those two players in mind," he added.

Chakravarthy wasn't particularly effective during India's title-winning campaign at the T20 World Cup and managed 14 wickets at an ordinary economy rate of more than 9. KKR finished third from bottom on the points table last season after winning just five of their 14 games.

The Ajinkya Rahane-led team will open their campaign against Mumbai Indians on March 29 in an away fixture.

Du Plessis said another player who could prove crucial for the side is Cameron Green even though he warned that the Australian all-rounder would be under tremendous price tag pressure given his Rs 25.2 crore contract.

"Cameron Green is a highly talented guy who has a lot of potential in him to succeed. He is the multi-skilled marquee buy for KKR and the replacement for Andre Russell."

"Green is six-foot tall, a massive guy, he bowls well, has a good bouncer and yorker, can hit the ball out of the stadium easily and is a proper batter. In short, he is a complete package. He balances KKR's team very well," he said.

"But form has not been on his side recently. With a price tag of Rs 25.2 crore, there is big price tag pressure he will carry. There is a lot of weight on his shoulders," he observed.

Former India player Lakshmi Prasad urged Rahane to bat at the top. "I always feel that KKR skipper Ajinkya Rahane should bat in the top order. He shouldn't bat at anything less than number three. He has done phenomenally well with CSK at number three and scored a lot of runs."

"So, he batting one down would be good for both, him and KKR. Cameron Green can come out to bat at number four. That will give him time to settle down and then start going after the bowlers. So, a top four of Finn Allen, Tim Seifert, Ajinkya Rahane and Cameron Green is going to be the go-to one," he suggested.



After a lost year, Mayank Yadav primed to switch it up for LSG

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

CHENNAI: Last Saturday, Lucknow Super Giants shared a short reel. It made the Indian cricketing fraternity sit up and smile. A slow motion video of Mayank Yadav nailing a toe-crushing yorker in full speed.

The short clip, which has more than 4M views, and the comments section is enough to understand the anticipation around Mayank's return to a full-fledged IPL season once again after missing most of 2025 due to a back injury. He came back during the recent T20 World Cup warm-up games, turning up for India A, but now the world will get to see Mayank steaming in full tilt. Watching it from afar, Devendra Sharma, cricket coach at Sonnet Club in New Delhi, is a happy man. "It's God's grace," Sharma, who has seen Mayank from close quarters, tells this daily.

After all, the last two years have been a roller coaster for the young pace sensation who broke through during 2024 IPL for the Super Giants. Two years ago, Mayank caught the attention when he hit the 150KPH mark consistently on his IPL debut. All of 21 at the time, the immediate reaction around Mayank was how Indian cricket should manage and protect the youngster in terms of workload. However, after four matches, he had abdominal soreness. In the weeks that followed, he was ruled out of the season. Mayank came back, made his T20I debut against Bangladesh, but missed the first half of the 2025 IPL due to back injury. When he returned, he looked a shadow of himself with reduced pace. However, another back injury meant he had to take a long lay off.

Soon, he was on his way to New Zealand for a back surgery, something similar to that of Jasprit Bumrah. Then began the long road back to the cricket field. In the months that followed, Mayank spent most of the time at the BCCI CoE where he underwent rehab. When he eventually took the field for India A during the warm-ups, Mayank went wicketless in the first outing against USA (0/37) but the pace was back. In the second game against Namibia, he stepped up and delivered a clinical spell (2/17). "He came to Delhi before going to CoE where he worked hard. He had two sessions every day, morning and evening. Initially, he started with two-three overs before gradually increasing the workload. By the time the T20 World Cup warm-ups came along, he was bowling 20 overs in a day. He is bowling well now as you would have seen in the T20 World Cup warm-ups," Sharma recalled.

PSG, Real Madrid and Arsenal march into Champions League last eight

AGENCIES

PARIS: Holders Paris Saint-Germain, record 15-time winners Real Madrid and Arsenal surged into the quarter-finals of the Champions League on Tuesday, while Sporting produced a brilliant comeback in Portugal to end Bodo/Glimt's remarkable run. PSG appear to be coming back into the form which saw them win the Champions League for the first time in their history last season, as the French club crushed Chelsea 3-0 in London to claim a comprehensive 8-2 aggregate victory

in their last-16 tie.

Chelsea had been left with a mountain to climb after a late collapse in last week's first leg, and PSG quickly snuffed out any chance the English club had.

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia followed his first-leg double by opening the scoring on six minutes at Stamford Bridge, with Chelsea defender Mamadou Sarr misjudging a long ball on his Champions League debut and then being outmuscled by the Georgian who applied the finish.

Bradley Barcola fired in a brilliant second goal from an Achraf



Hakimi assist, and the home fans were streaming for the exits when substitute Senny Mayulu swept in PSG's third on the night

just after the hour. "We clearly dominated, we are very happy to be in the quarter-finals and I think it is

well deserved," PSG coach Luis Enrique told Canal Plus.

PSG's fourth victory against English opposition in a two-legged knockout tie since the start of last year sets up a last-eight tie against Liverpool or Galatasaray, who meet on Wednesday at Anfield with the Turkish side leading 1-0 from the first leg.

Two-time European champions Chelsea were not the only English club to be eliminated on Tuesday, with Manchester City losing 2-1 at home to Real as they went out 5-1 on aggregate.

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