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## Modi Slams Congress Over West Asia Remarks, Warns of Risks to Indians Abroad

PM says 'provocative' statements could strain Gulf ties as Centre prioritises safety of citizens amid conflict

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

**THIRUVALLA (KERALA), APR 4:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday accused the Indian National Congress of making "provocative" remarks on the unfolding situation in West Asia, warning that such statements could endanger the safety of Indians living in the region. Addressing an NDA rally here, Modi alleged that the opposition was attempting to strain India's diplomatic relations with Gulf nations for political mileage, asserting that safeguarding Indian citizens abroad remains his government's foremost priority. "Elections will come and go, but the safety of Indians is para-



mount," he said. Highlighting the stakes, the Prime Minister noted that lakhs of people from Kerala are employed in Gulf countries, while fishermen from Goa and Tamil Nadu are currently stranded in parts of the Middle East, including Iran, amid the ongoing conflict. He said efforts were underway to ensure their safe return. Taking aim at the Congress, Modi accused its leaders of making statements that could create panic and damage sensitive diplomatic ties. "They are only concerned about politics and power, not the people of India," he said, adding that the party had "betrayed the trust" of

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## Future Wars Will Be Won Across Domains, Not Battlefields Alone: CDS

Reviews LoC Preparedness

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

**SRINAGAR, APR 4:** Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan on Saturday carried out a comprehensive review of the security and operational preparedness along the Line of Control (LoC) in North Kashmir, emphasising the urgent need for multi-domain readiness, enhanced jointness among the armed forces and deeper technological integration to counter emerging threats.

During his visit, the CDS assessed the overall security landscape and operational posture along the LoC and lauded the formations for their high level of preparedness, doctrinal clarity and professional excellence. At Baramulla, he was briefed on future force applications and ongoing efforts towards the infusion of advanced technologies into military operations.

Addressing officers of the Chinar Corps, General Chauhan underscored that the nature of warfare is undergoing a profound transformation, necessitating a decisive shift from a domain-



centric approach to integrated Multi-Domain Operations (MDO). He stressed that seamless coordination across land, air, maritime, cyber, space and cognitive domains is critical to

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### India Keeps LPG Supply Lines Alive Amid Hormuz Crisis

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

**NEW DELHI, APR 4:** India's cooking gas supply chain showed resilience amid escalating tensions in West Asia, with an Indian LPG tanker successfully crossing the Strait of Hormuz and an Iranian cargo reaching Mangalore, signalling continued fuel inflows despite disruptions in the region.

An official statement said the LPG vessel "Green Sanvi," carrying 46,650 tonnes of cargo and 25 crew members, safely transited the volatile maritime corridor, becoming the seventh Indian-flagged tanker to do so since tensions flared following the 2026 US-Israel strikes on Iran and subsequent retaliation by Iran.

In a parallel development, LPG carrier "Sea Bird," loaded with around 44,000 tonnes of Iranian fuel, berthed at Mangalore on April 2 and is currently discharging cargo. The shipment is being viewed as India's first import of Iranian energy in nearly seven years, enabled by a temporary sanctions waiver by the United States to stabilise global fuel prices.

Despite the near halt in shipping activity through the strategically vital

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## INDIA WEATHERS GLOBAL SHOCKS, EMERGES RESILIENT: JAISHANKAR

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

**RAIPUR, APR 4:** India has come through a series of recent global shocks with resilience and stability, External Affairs Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar said on Saturday, asserting that the country has managed both domestic and external challenges fairly successfully.

Addressing the convocation ceremony at IIM Raipur, Jaishankar said multiple global disruptions—including the ongoing conflict in West Asia—have tested the resilience of nations, highlighting the deep interdependence brought about by globalisation. He noted that even

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## Chill returns to Kashmir amid fresh snowfall, widespread rains

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

**SRINAGAR, APR 04:** A chill returned to Kashmir on Saturday as fresh snowfall in the upper reaches and rains across the plains sent temperatures plunging across the region.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that Gurez, Tulail, Gulmarg and Sonamarg received fresh snowfall, while widespread rains lashed the plains across the Valley.

According to rainfall data for the past 24 hours ending 8:30 am, Baramulla recorded 45.5 mm of rain, followed

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### All Rivers Flowing Below Danger Levels After Fresh Rainfall Across J&K

HT News Network / Agencies

**SRINAGAR, APRIL 4:** Water levels across the River Jhelum and its tributaries remained within normal limits on Saturday morning, even as moderate rainfall was recorded across

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## J&K Assembly Passes Jan Vishwas 2.0 Bill to Ease Business Climate

HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 04:** The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Saturday passed the Jan Vishwas Second (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, marking a step towards decriminalising minor offences and streamlining laws to improve ease of living and business in the Union Territory.

The Bill was moved by Agriculture Minister Javid Ahmed Dar on behalf of

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who heads the government. Introducing the legislation, the Minister said it seeks to amend several existing enactments by rationalising penalties, removing criminal provisions for minor violations, and repealing outdated laws that hinder economic activity.

The Speaker later took up the Bill for consideration, following which it was passed by the House.

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## Speaker Cracks Whip to Safeguard MLAs' Dignity



HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 04:** In a strong assertion

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### Budget Session Logs 110 Hours, Heavy Legislative Activity in J&K Assembly

HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 04:** The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly's Budget Session 2026 witnessed extensive

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## J&K Passes Private Universities Bill, CM Calls It 'Milestone for Youth'

Legislation aims to expand higher education access, attract top institutions and curb student outmigration

HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 04:** The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Saturday passed the Jammu and Kashmir Private Universities Bill, 2026, with Chief Minister Omar Abdullah hailing the move as a landmark step

towards transforming the region's higher education landscape.

Congratulating Education Minister Sakeena Itoo and all stakeholders involved, the Chief Minister described the legislation as a "milestone moment" for the youth of the Union Territory. He said the passage of the



Bill reflects the government's commitment to creating better educational opportunities and strengthening academic infrastructure within Jammu and Kashmir.

"The Assembly has taken a significant step towards shaping a

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## Rather Earns Rare All Party Praise for Smooth Budget Session

HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 04:** In a rare show of unanimity cutting across party lines, the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather was on Saturday widely hailed for the smooth, efficient and impartial conduct of the Budget Session-2026, with members describing it as a benchmark for future proceedings.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary led the praise, commending the Speaker's experience and leadership in steering the House through debates marked by differing viewpoints without disruptions. He said the orderly conduct of business

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**CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....**

**Modi Slams.....**

the people of Kerala and should apologise. His remarks come in the wake of criticism from Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi, who had accused the Prime Minister of compromising India's position in favour of the United States and Israel, and failing to ensure the safety of Indians stranded in the Gulf. Without naming her directly, Modi said the ongoing crisis had "exposed the mindset" of the Congress and its allies, reiterating his appeal to opposition leaders to avoid "careless statements" at a time when millions of Indians depend on the country's diplomatic outreach for their security. Emphasising India's strong ties with Gulf nations, he said these relationships were playing a crucial role in safeguarding Indian nationals during the crisis. (Agencies)

**Future Wars.....**

achieving decisive military outcomes. He called for accelerated joint training for futuristic warfare, harmonisation of doctrines and the development of interoperable command and control structures to ensure synchronised operational effects. The CDS also emphasised the need for a well-defined roadmap to tackle emerging challenges through technological adaptation, cognitive resilience and collective preparedness. Reiterating the importance of foresight and innovation, General Chauhan said that preparedness must be anchored in a unified warfighting philosophy and a whole-of-nation approach. He exhorted all ranks to maintain operational excellence, embrace jointness as a way of life and remain prepared to dominate the full spectrum of future conflict.

The CDS also interacted with members of the civil administration, eminent citizens and other stakeholders in Baramulla, reviewing ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening nation-building efforts in the region.

**India Keeps LPG.....**

Strait of Hormuz, several Indian vessels have managed safe passage in recent days. Earlier this week, LPG carriers "BW TYR" and "BW ELM" delivered a combined 94,000 tonnes of cargo to Indian ports, while previous consignments aboard "Pine Gas," "Jag Vasant," "MT Shivalik," and "MT Nanda Devi" had already replenished supplies. However, the situation remains delicate, with 17 Indian-flagged vessels and around 460 seafarers still positioned on the western side of the strait. Authorities are closely tracking their movement, while ensuring safety and coordination through the Directorate General of Shipping.

India, which meets nearly 60 per cent of its LPG demand through imports — most of it from Gulf nations — has been facing one of its worst supply shortages in decades. Officials said the continued arrival of shipments is expected to ease pressure on domestic availability. The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways said it is maintaining round-the-clock monitoring of maritime operations, adding that all Indian seafarers in the Gulf region are safe and port operations across the country remain normal with no congestion reported.

**India Weathers.....**

distant conflicts have had profound impacts across societies. "No one can dispute that multiple global shocks have recently tested our resilience and that India has come through them solidly," he said. Referring to the ongoing crisis in West Asia following military strikes involving the United States and Israel on Iran, Jaishankar said the developments have disrupted global fuel supplies and led to shortages of hydrocarbons, affecting economies worldwide. He emphasised that building robust national capabilities remains crucial to navigating such uncertainties. "There is no getting away from strengthening national capacities," he said, adding that it is the most effective way to de-risk and enhance strategic leverage.

Jaishankar also pointed to structural changes in the global order, marked by shifts in relative power and influence among nations. Rapid advancements in technology, energy, military capabilities, connectivity and resources, he said, have encouraged risk-taking in an increasingly competitive world. "Everything today is being leveraged, if not weaponised," he remarked, warning of a more volatile and unpredictable global environment. The minister underlined the growing need to hedge risks and diversify strategies, both in business and foreign policy. He identified the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts and climate change as the three major challenges shaping the current decade.

He added that inclusive growth, representative politics and decisive leadership have laid a strong foundation for India to deal with future global disruptions.

**Chill returns.....**

by Nowgam Handwara at 45.6 mm and Lolab at 42.2 mm.

Srinagar received 25.1 mm of rainfall, while the airport recorded 29.2 mm. Budgam and Kulgam recorded 24 mm and 24.2 mm respectively, while Sopore received 22.8 mm.

In the Jammu region, Rajouri recorded the highest rainfall at 61 mm, followed by Batote at 53.8 mm and Poonch at 45.5 mm. Udhampur received 31.7 mm and Katra 32.2 mm, officials said.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department said erratic weather conditions are likely to continue across Jammu and Kashmir till April 10, with intermittent spells of rain and snow forecast in the coming days.

According to the MeT office on April 5 and 6, the region is expected to witness partly cloudy conditions with light rain at isolated locations. A fresh spell of light to moderate rain and snowfall in higher reaches, along with thunder and gusty winds, is likely at many places on April 7 and 8.

Between April 9 and 11, brief spells of light rain and snowfall in higher reaches are expected at scattered places, while the weather is likely to remain generally dry from April 12 to 15.

The MeT office has issued an advisory warning of thunder, hailstorms and gusty winds reaching speeds of 40-50 kmph at a few places on April 4 and April 7-8.

It said intense showers for short durations may trigger flash floods, landslides and waterlogging in vulnerable and low-lying areas. Farmers have been advised to suspend farm operations, while travellers have been asked to plan their movement accordingly.

**RAIN, LANDSLIDES DISRUPT TRAFFIC, MULTIPLE ROADS SHUT IN J&K**

Meanwhile, multiple roads across Jammu and Kashmir remained closed or witnessed disruptions on Saturday following fresh rainfall, snowfall and landslides, while the Traffic Police issued an advisory urging commuters to avoid unnecessary travel and check road status before undertaking journeys.

Officials said movement on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway (NH-44) remained slow over the past 24 hours due to landslides between Nashri tunnel and Banihal, and single-lane traffic between Marog and Kishtwari Pather. The situation was further affected by the breakdown of three heavy motor vehicles.

In view of the forecast of continued rain and snowfall over the next few days, authorities advised commuters to travel only after confirming road conditions from traffic control units in Jammu, Srinagar and Ramban. Night travel on the highway has been discouraged due to the risk of shooting stones, landslides and ongoing construction works along the Ramban-Banihal stretch.

Traffic officials said that subject to weather conditions, light motor vehicles and passenger vehicles would be allowed to ply on NH-44 from both sides. However, no heavy motor vehicles carrying goods will be permitted from Qazigund towards Jammu between midnight and 6 am due to a religious congregation at Vijaypur. Security forces' convoys will be regulated separately.

The Kishtwar-Sinthan-Anantnag road remained closed for vehicular movement as per existing orders, while the Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri (SSG) road will remain open only for regulated traffic, subject to clearance from road maintenance agencies due to avalanche risk along the Zojila axis.

Authorities said vehicles will be allowed from Srinagar towards Kargil with a cut-off timing in place, and motorists have been advised to carry anti-skid chains.

The Mughal Road will remain open for light motor vehicles from both sides for limited hours between late morning and afternoon, subject to weather conditions.

Meanwhile, the Bandipora-Gurez road continued to remain closed due to fresh snowfall.

In Reasi district, heavy rainfall triggered landslides, blocking key roads in Mahore and Arnas areas and leaving hundreds of people stranded. Officials said restoration work is underway, but continuous rain is hampering clearance operations.

Authorities have advised people to follow lane discipline and avoid overtaking to prevent congestion on highways—(KNO)

**All Rivers Flowing.....**

several parts of Jammu and Kashmir over the past 24 hours, according to data compiled by Kashmir Weather.

The latest gauge readings at 9:00 AM indicated that the River Jhelum was flowing well below danger marks at key monitoring points, with Sangam at 6.63 ft against a danger level of 25 ft, Pampore at 0.53 m against 5.0 m, and Munshibagh at 7.05 ft against 21 ft.

The data suggests no immediate flood threat in the Valley despite continuous rainfall activity.

Among tributaries, Vishow Nallah at Khudwani recorded 5.21 m against a danger level of 8.50 m, while Rambiyara Nallah at Wachi stood at 0.33 m. Lidder Nallah at Batkoot recorded a negative reading of minus 0.10 m, indicating low discharge levels.

Doodhganga at Barzulla was measured at 1.80 m against a danger level of 3.8 m, while Sindh Nallah at Doderhama stood at 0.64 m, both within safe limits, officials said.

Rainfall data showed widespread precipitation across the Kashmir region, with Baramulla recording the highest at 45.5 mm, followed by Nowgam Handwara at 45.6 mm and Lolab at 42.2 mm.

Srinagar recorded 25.1 mm of rainfall, while the airport received 29.2 mm. Gulmarg recorded 32.2 mm, Budgam 24.0 mm, and Kulgam 24.2 mm during the same period.

In south Kashmir, Qazigund recorded 18.8 mm, Anantnag data was not available, while Shopian received 15.3 mm and Pulwama 13.3 mm.

Kupwara district also saw significant rainfall, with Bumhama recording 38.6 mm.

In the Jammu region, Rajouri recorded the highest rainfall at 61.0 mm, followed by Batote at 53.8 mm and Poonch at 45.5 mm.

Other areas including Udhampur received 31.7 mm, Katra 32.2 mm, and Ramban 24.0 mm, while Jammu recorded 14.4 mm.

In Ladakh, Leh recorded no rainfall, while data for Kargil was not available.

Officials said the current situation remains stable, with no alerts issued as water levels continue to stay within safe thresholds.

Residents, however, have been advised to remain cautious as weather conditions may change, particularly in low-lying areas prone to waterlogging.

The data was compiled by Kashmir Weather based on inputs from the Irrigation and Flood Control Department.

**J&K Assembly.....**

During the proceedings, members Nizam-ud-din Bhat, Balwant Singh Mankotia, Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah and Tanvir Sadiq withdrew their amendments after the government assured them that concerns raised would be addressed within the framework of the new law.

**Speaker Cracks.....**

to uphold the sanctity of the House, Speaker of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, on Saturday directed the government to take corrective measures within two months to ensure the dignity, privileges and protocol of Members of Legislative Assembly are protected.

The directions came as the Speaker concluded a Short Duration Discussion on the final day of the Assembly session, during which several members voiced concern over what they described as a decline in the respect and role accorded to elected representatives.

The discussion was initiated by MLA Pawan Kumar Gupta, who alleged that the dignity of legislators had been compromised. He further pointed out that MLAs were often not taken into confidence during the formulation of development plans for their constituencies, raising questions over participatory governance.

Responding to the concerns, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary assured the House that maintaining the dignity of MLAs remained a priority for the government. He said that complaints raised by members were taken seriously and warned that strict action would be initiated against officers found violating the privileges of legislators.

The debate also saw participation from Chairman of the Privileges Committee Nizam-ud-din Bhat and MLA Hasnain Masoodi, who echoed concerns regarding the need to reinforce institutional respect and accountability.

The Speaker's directive places the onus on the government to act swiftly, with the two-month deadline seen as a crucial window to restore confidence among legislators and reinforce the principles of democratic functioning.

**Budget Session.....**

legislative business, with proceedings spanning 110 hours and six minutes across 22 sittings, Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather informed the House on Saturday.

Presenting a detailed account of the session's business, the Speaker said that eight government bills were received, introduced and passed during the session. In addition, 25 papers and one ordinance were laid on the table of the House.

He said that legislative engagement remained high on the private members' front as well, with 36 previously pending and 39 new private members' bills received. Of these, 36 were admitted while three were disallowed. As many as 72 bills were listed for business, 24 taken up for discussion and two were introduced in the House.

On the question hour proceedings, the Speaker said that a total of 1,528 admitted questions were received, including 802 starred and 726 unstarred. Of these, 1,379 were listed, 151 taken up for answers, while 144 were disallowed, two withdrawn and three not listed. Members also raised 331 supplementary questions during the session.

The House also received 110 calling attention notices, out of which 47 were admitted and 63 disallowed. As many as 26 notices were listed and taken up for discussion.

Regarding resolutions, the Speaker said 128 were received, of which 101 were admitted and 27 disallowed. Fourteen resolutions were balloted and listed, with

only four taken up for discussion, while none were adopted.

The Speaker further informed that two short duration discussions were held during the session, reflecting focused deliberations on select issues.

On financial business, he said that 2,231 cut motions were received, out of which 2,059 were allowed and 172 disallowed, indicating significant participation by members in scrutinising budgetary proposals.

Overall, the session reflected a high degree of legislative activity and participation, with members actively utilising various parliamentary instruments to raise issues and seek accountability from the government.

**J&K Passes.....**

brighter future for our youth," he said, adding that the new law would open doors for reputed private institutions to establish campuses in the region.

The Bill, formally introduced during the concluding day of the Budget Session, was moved for consideration and passage by the Education Minister and subsequently cleared by the House through a voice vote.

Highlighting the broader vision behind the legislation, the Chief Minister said it would help reduce the need for students to move outside Jammu and Kashmir in pursuit of higher education, while also fostering a vibrant ecosystem for learning, research and innovation.

He noted that the initiative is expected to position the Union Territory as an emerging hub of academic excellence, attracting investment in the education sector and creating new opportunities for local youth.

The government believes the move will not only enhance access to quality education but also contribute to economic growth by generating

employment in academic and allied sectors.

**Rather Earns.....**

ensured that members, especially first-time MLAs, gained valuable insight into legislative functioning.

Calling the session a platform for meaningful discussions and constructive debate, Choudhary said it contributed significantly to strengthening democratic processes. He also lauded the efforts of Assembly staff, officers and officials, noting that their behind-the-scenes work played a crucial role in ensuring seamless proceedings.

The Deputy Chief Minister further acknowledged the role of the media in amplifying the voice of the Assembly and highlighting public issues, while expressing gratitude to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and members for collectively ensuring that people's concerns were effectively raised.

On the concluding day, legislators from across the political spectrum, including Surjeet Singh Slathia, M. Y. Tarigami, Nizam-ud-Din Bhat, Sajad Gani Lone, Pirzada Farooq Ahmad Shah, Tanvir Sadiq, Mir Saifullah, Rafiq Ahmad Naik, Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurezi), Sajjad Shaheen, Aijaz Ahmad Jan and Salman Sagar, joined in appreciating the Speaker's conduct of the House.

Members noted that, for the first time, they were given adequate and extended opportunities to raise issues concerning their constituencies. They said the Speaker ensured decorum, equal participation and fair allocation of time, enabling diverse voices to be heard effectively.

Describing the session as highly productive, the House collectively observed that the Budget Session-2026 set a positive precedent in terms of discipline, quality of debate and member participation.

**National Law University in Budgam still in planning stage: Govt**

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

**JAMMU, APR 04:** The Jammu and Kashmir government on Saturday said the proposed National Law University (NLU) in Budgam has not been established yet, as the matter is still under consideration.

Replying to a question in the Legislative Assembly tabled by MLA Budgam Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi, the government, as reported by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that although the J&K National Law University Act, 2018, has already been enacted, the government is yet to notify the headquarters of the university.

Once the notification under the Act is issued, further steps for the establishment of the university will be taken accordingly, it said.

The government further informed that a committee headed by a senior official had examined various aspects related to the establishment of NLU, including infra-

structure, faculty, admission process and financial requirements. "The committee has submitted its report, which is currently under examination before the government," it said.

On the status of Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) campus in Budgam, the government said that the university is actively pursuing the construction of a College of Teacher Education (CTE) building at its satellite campus in Srinagar.

It said that the project is being taken up with financial assistance under the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA) loan. The government added that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) is under preparation and will be submitted to HEFA and the Ministry of Education for approval.

However, it said that approval is still awaited from the Ministry of Education for the utilisation of the unspent balance of the sanctioned loan. "The response from the Ministry of Education is still awaited," the government said—(KNO)

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## Departure of Hajj Pilgrims: Div Com Kashmir reviews preparations

Stresses on close coordination among agencies for smooth departure of pilgrims

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, APR 04:** In preparation for the upcoming Hajj pilgrimage, the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, today chaired a high-level meeting to review arrangements for the smooth departure of pilgrims.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners from across Jammu & Kashmir and Kargil, besides departments including Airport Authority, Emigration, Customs, Tourism, Public Works (R&B), PHE, KPDC, Health, Transport, Traffic, Police, CISF, J&K Bank, and other concerned agencies.

Hajj flights are scheduled to operate from April 18 to April 28, 2026. This year, a total of 4,706 pilgrims from Jammu & Kashmir will undertake the sacred journey of Hajj.

Emphasizing the importance of coordinated efforts, the Divisional Commissioner directed all



departments to ensure comprehensive preparations for the pilgrimage. He instructed Deputy

Commissioners to oversee arrangements and facilitate pil-

grims effectively.

Special attention was given to ensuring the availability of essential services at the Hajj House, including uninterrupted electricity and water supply, sanitation, and healthcare facilities.

The Divisional Commissioner further instructed J&K Bank to maintain adequate availability of foreign exchange in lower denominations to avoid inconvenience to pilgrims. He also called for proper boarding and lodging arrangements for pilgrims arriving from Jammu and Ladakh.

To ensure seamless travel, Customs and Emigration authorities were asked to establish special facilitation counters at the airport for quick clearance.

For real-time coordination and information sharing, the Divisional Commissioner directed the Hajj Officer to create a dedicated WhatsApp group comprising all concerned officials and Hajj aspirants.

## Lal Chowk set for revamp as traders flag gaps, administration promises time-bound action

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

**SRINAGAR, APR 04:** With tourist footfall rising and pressure on civic infrastructure mounting, the Traders Association Lal Chowk on Saturday pitched for a comprehensive revamp of the city's commercial hub during a meeting with the Divisional Commissioner, Srinagar, securing an assurance of phased, time-bound action.

The delegation, led by President Mohammad Iqbal Khan and comprising members Jatinder Singh, Naresh Kumar Mehra and Nisar Ahmad Bhat, as per details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), raised a series of issues ranging from urban planning gaps and traffic congestion to sanitation, pedestrian access and overall aesthetics.

"Lal Chowk is the face of Srinagar's economy and culture. But without planned development and efficient civic management, the pressure of increasing business and tourism is clearly showing," Khan said.

He stressed that the area requires structured urban planning, streamlined traffic and pedestrian movement and sustained beautification to match its growing importance as both a business district and a tourist destination. "We are not just asking for fixes, we are seeking a long-term, coordinated vision that makes Lal Chowk organized, accessible and truly tourist-friendly," he added.

As per the details, the association said peak-hour congestion, inconsistent sanitation and lack of coordinated infrastructure upgrades are affecting both traders and visitors, particularly as Srinagar witnesses a steady surge in tourist arrivals.

The traders said the Divisional Commissioner gave a patient hearing to their concerns and assured that the issues would be addressed systematically in a phased and time-bound manner.

## J&K Adopting Multi-Pronged Strategy To Ward Off Porcupine Threat To Saffron Crop In Pampore

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APR 4:** The Jammu and Kashmir government on Saturday said it is implementing a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy to tackle porcupine-induced damage to saffron crop in Pampore, with field evidence confirming the active presence of the species in the region.

Replying to a calling attention notice moved by National Conference MLA Hasnain Masoodi in the Assembly, Forest Minister Javed Ahmad Rana said habitat conditions such as caves, crevices, hilly terrains and overgrown private lands provide a favourable shelter for porcupines near the saffron-growing areas in the south Kashmir town.

To mitigate the problem, the government has proposed a series of measures, including clearance of caves, bushes and undergrowth in coordination with the revenue department and the Panchayati Raj Institutions, the minister said. The measures also include installation of deep-set mesh barriers (up to 1.5 metres underground) around vulnerable fields, protection of orchard trees using aluminium wrapping and reflective coatings, plantation of naturally repellent species such as iris, wormwood and wildyam, use of organic repellents and olfactory



deterrents like naphthalene, and deployment of motion-activated lighting and sound systems, he said.

The minister also said the agriculture department, in collaboration with the Saffron Research Station, Pampore, is documenting the extent of damage to develop long-term scientific management strategies.

A dedicated control room for man-animal conflict has been established at nearby Khrew in Pulwama district, along with regular night patrolling, installation of capture cages for live trapping and awareness campaigns for farmers, the minister said.

On monkey intrusion in agricultural fields at Wahab Sahib in Pampore, the minister said that while monkeys are currently not listed under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, awareness initiatives are being undertaken, and firecrackers are being distributed to farmers as a deterrent.

He said a coordinated, time-bound action plan involving the agriculture, revenue and wildlife departments, along with local communities, is being formulated to address the issue through field protection, habitat management and long-term population control.

## India Pushes for Affordable Insulin as IDF President-Elect Meets Jitendra Singh

Focus on Biosimilars, Indigenous manufacturing and global supply concerns amid rising diabetes burden

■ HT News Desk / Agencies

**NEW DELHI, APR 4:** Dr Niti Pall, President-elect of the International Diabetes Federation, on Saturday met Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh to discuss strengthening India's capabilities in biosimilar insulin production and expanding access to affordable diabetes care technologies.

The meeting underscored the urgency of enhancing domestic manufacturing of insulin, particularly biosimilar variants, as well as scaling up Continuous Glucose Monitoring (CGM) systems amid growing global demand and affordability challenges.

Dr Pall flagged concerns over the future availability of insulin, noting that production remains concentrated among a handful of multinational companies. She cautioned that a shift in focus towards newer therapies, including GLP-1 drugs, could strain insulin supply chains, posing risks for patients with Type 1 Diabetes



who depend on lifelong insulin therapy. Highlighting the importance of cost-effective alternatives, she said biosimilar insulin could play a crucial role in improving access, particularly in developing countries where high prices continue to limit treatment.

Dr Jitendra Singh acknowledged India's established

strengths in pharmaceuticals but pointed out that domestic insulin manufacturing remains limited, describing it as a critical gap and a significant opportunity. He said efforts are underway through the Department of Biotechnology to scale up production capacity, including support to Indian companies. Emphasising India's role

in global healthcare, the Minister said augmenting insulin supply is both a national necessity and an international responsibility, especially as countries in Asia and Africa increasingly look to India for affordable solutions.

The discussions also covered emerging diabetes technologies, with Dr Pall noting the rapid

growth of low-cost CGM devices and insulin pumps from countries like China, which are gaining market share due to competitive pricing.

Dr Singh said Indian firms possess the technological capability to develop similar devices and stressed the need for stronger industry participation and policy support to scale up production.

Both sides agreed on the importance of deeper collaboration among researchers, industry stakeholders and global partners in areas such as clinical trials, innovation and financing. Dr Singh proposed holding a stakeholder consultation during Dr Pall's next visit to India in July to explore pathways for expanding manufacturing and global outreach.

The interaction reflects a broader push to strengthen India's bio-manufacturing ecosystem while addressing the rising diabetes burden, positioning the country as a key player in ensuring equitable access to essential therapies worldwide.

## Jammu Division of Northern Railway Now Fully Functional

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / AGENCIES

**JAMMU, APRIL 4:** The newly created Jammu division of Northern Railway is now functioning as a full-fledged division, with most of its operational and financial systems fully shifted, and it will focus on enhancing passenger amenities, ensuring safety, and increasing freight logistics in the upcoming year, officials said on Saturday.

Railway authorities are optimistic that the Jammu division will continue to strengthen in the coming years through improved passenger services and enhanced freight operations.

"Our four key priorities for the coming year will be enhancement of passenger amenities, ensuring safety and security in train operations, expansion of infrastructure, and an increase in freight loading. We will be undertaking extensive work in all these areas in the coming year," Divisional Railway Manager Vivek Kumar told reporters here.

Kumar noted that the division, formed during 2025-26 after reorganisation from the Firozpur Division, has made significant progress in a short span of time.

"During the financial year 2025-26, the Jammu Division was established for the first time as a new division under Northern Railway. It has now been reorganised as a full-fledged division. The division is fully carrying out all operations," he added.

Kumar mentioned that the Indian Railways has achieved a record freight loading of around 1.7 billion tonnes this year, reflecting robust growth in the sector.

Highlighting major developments, Kumar noted that rail connectivity in Jammu and Kashmir has expanded significantly, with previously unconnected sections now integrated into the main railway network.

"As part of the broader vision of expansion of Indian Railways, our network in Jammu and Kashmir has also expanded significantly. Rail lines that were earlier not connected to the main railway network have now been successfully integrated," he added.

He outlined major developments, mentioning that on May 25 last year, under the Amrit Bharat Scheme, the newly redeveloped Bajinath-Paprola station in Himachal Pradesh was inaugurated virtually by the prime minister and is now fully operational.

Kumar indicated that the Katra-Banihal section, which includes the iconic Chenab Bridge and Anji Khad Bridge, was dedicated to the nation by the Prime Minister in June, thereby enhancing connectivity in the region.

"Two pairs of Vande Bharat Express trains are currently operational between Katra and Srinagar, receiving a positive response from passengers and giving a fillip to tourism and local mobility," he added.

Kumar highlighted the division's critical role during emergencies, such as the Pahalgam terror attack in April last year, when special trains were organised for the evacuation of affected individuals.

He also shared that a consignment of cherries was transported from Katra to Chennai in a record time of approximately 30 hours, improving logistics for perishable goods.

During Operation Sindoor, railway services maintained uninterrupted operations, facilitating the movement of defence personnel and the evacuation of civilians, with no trains halted during this period, he said.

Regarding the floods that occurred in August and September, Kumar noted that while railway infrastructure sustained damage, services were restored as quickly as possible to minimise inconvenience to passengers.

Around 3,000 stranded passengers in Katra were evacuated via Udhampur using a combination of buses and trains, he said.

He added that the railways transported nearly 20,000 tonnes of apples from Kashmir to Delhi markets during the disruption of road connectivity, providing crucial support to the local horticulture sector.

On operational aspects, Kumar said the entire accounting system, including salary and billing processes, has been shifted to the Jammu Division, making it administratively self-reliant.

He said that pension disbursements for retired employees will continue to be managed from their parent units, while all new financial and operational activities will now be handled within the division.

Highlighting passenger services, he stated that a special "flood special" train operating between Katra and Srinagar acted as a lifeline during the crisis.

This service has now been extended to Katra, and a daily express train between Katra and Srinagar, equipped with reclining chair car coaches, has been introduced as a permanent fixture, he added.

Kumar mentioned that discussions are ongoing about further expansion of rail sections, although no concrete decisions have been made yet.

He expressed confidence that the Jammu Division will continue to strengthen in the coming years with improved passenger services and enhanced freight operations.

# DC Budgam reviews issues of Persons with Special Abilities

Issues comprehensive directions for inclusive welfare measures

HT NEWS NETWORK

**BUDGAM, APRIL 04:** Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, today chaired a detailed review meeting to assess sector-wise issues, concerns, and welfare measures pertaining to persons with special abilities, with special focus on specially-abled children across the district.

A comprehensive memorandum outlining department-wise demands and challenges was presented during the meeting, highlighting gaps in implementation, accessibility constraints, and the need for strengthened institutional support.

Taking note of the issues raised, the DC issued detailed, time-bound directions to all concerned departments for prompt redressal and effective implementation on the ground.

It was informed that persons with special abilities are facing difficulties in accessing benefits under existing schemes. Stakeholders demanded immediate implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, provision of assistive devices including wheelchairs, tricycles/scooters, hearing aids, elbow sticks, laptops, and distribution of essential items to needy beneficiaries.

The DC directed the Social Welfare Department to ensure saturation of all eligible beneficiaries, streamline distribution of assistive devices, enhance financial assistance, and facilitate livelihood opportunities through vendor carts, prefabricated stalls, and designated vending spaces at key public locations.

Issues related to certification, lack of proper verification, and non-availability of specialists were highlighted. Concerns were also raised regarding rejection of railway concession forms due to improper



stamping.

The DC directed the Chief Medical Officer to standardize certification strictly through specialists, ensure proper stamping with name, registration number, and place of posting, conduct medical boards at accessible locations (preferably ground floor), and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to prevent misuse. He further instructed to explore provision of special health insurance, free diagnostics, and availability of specialized medical professionals.

Demand for development of dedicated sports infrastructure, including indoor and mini stadiums, along with provision of sports kits and exposure opportunities was also raised.

The DC directed the Sports Department to promote sports activities among persons with special abilities, organize regular

tournaments, and prepare a phased plan for creation of inclusive sports infrastructure.

Concerns regarding lack of accessibility in schools, absence of special educators, and limited educational support were highlighted. Stakeholders demanded free admission, scholarships, Braille books, sign language interpreters, vocational training, and home-based education.

The DC directed the Chief Education Officer to ensure barrier-free access in all schools, appointment of special educators, and provision of scholarships, study material, and exam concessions. He also stressed capacity building of teachers in special education.

The memorandum highlighted inadequate inclusion of persons with special abilities under MGNREGA and other schemes.

The DC directed the Rural Development Department to ensure their inclusion with due reservation, provide housing support, and facilitate sustainable livelihood opportunities.

It was demanded that all eligible persons with special abilities from economically weaker sections be covered under AAY ration cards.

The DC directed the concerned department to ensure identification and coverage of all such beneficiaries under NFSA provisions without delay.

Issues regarding implementation of fare concessions and facilitation in issuance of driving licenses were also raised.

The DC directed the RTO to ensure strict implementation of concessional provisions and conduct special drives for issuance of driving licenses to eligible applicants.

Concerns regarding lack of lifts,

ramps, and accessible infrastructure in government buildings and public spaces were also highlighted.

The DC directed the Public Works Department to make all public infrastructure barrier-free and ensure incorporation of accessibility features in all ongoing and future projects. He further directed that no new project should be approved without adherence to accessibility norms and inclusive design standards.

The DC also directed the Revenue Department to simplify procedures, ensure time-bound issuance of certificates, and make offices accessible, preferably at the ground floor.

Stakeholders demanded improved accessibility in banks, priority services, and provision of soft loans to artisans with special abilities.

The DC directed banking institutions to ensure barrier-free access, extend priority services, and facilitate financial inclusion through easy credit and support for participation in exhibitions and livelihood activities.

The DC emphasized close inter-departmental coordination to ensure effective implementation and directed that no eligible beneficiary should be left out.

He reiterated that ensuring dignity, accessibility, and equal opportunities for persons with special abilities remains a top priority of the district administration and called for a mission-mode approach for holistic inclusion.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Programme Officer ICDS, General Manager DIC, Additional Commissioner Revenue, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Education Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, District Development Employment Officer, District Social Welfare Officer, Assistant Director FCS&CA, other concerned officers and delegation of specially abled persons of the district.

## DPEO Bandipora flags off awareness Vehicle for Panchayat Electoral Roll Revision

HT NEWS NETWORK

**BANDIPORA, APRIL 04:** District Panchayat Election Officer (DPEO) Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, today flagged off an awareness vehicle to mobilize public participation in the Summary Revision of the Panchayat Electoral Roll across the district.

The initiative is being carried out under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) campaign.



The awareness vehicle, equipped with banners, public address systems, and informational material, will traverse various parts of the district to disseminate key information regarding the electoral roll revision process, eligibility criteria, and the importance of voter registration.

As part of the revision exercise, Block Development Officers (BDOs) have been designated as Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs), while Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), Multipurpose Workers (MPWs), and Gram Rozgar Sevaks (GRSSs) will function as Polling Booth Level Officers (PEBOs) to facilitate grassroots-level outreach and assistance.

To ensure maximum public participation, eight special camps will be organized on Saturdays and Sundays at each polling station across the district. Additionally, Panchayat Electoral Rolls (PERs) will be made available at every Panchayat for public inspection, and citizens can file claims and objections up to April 29, 2026.

Adequate quantities of PER forms have been made available at all polling stations to facilitate easy access for the general public.

Speaking on the occasion, the DPEO underscored the significance of the SVEEP campaign in ensuring an inclusive, accurate, and error-free electoral roll. She emphasized that the initiative aims to ensure that no eligible voter is left out of the democratic process. Highlighting April 1, 2026, as the qualifying date, she urged all eligible citizens to verify their details and enroll themselves if not already registered.

The campaign places special emphasis on encouraging first-time voters to participate actively, thereby strengthening electoral inclusion across the district.

The flag-off ceremony was attended by the Deputy District Election Officer, Deputy Chief Education Officer, Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD), Assistant Commissioner Panchayat (ACP), Roll Observers, and other concerned officers and officials.

## District Admin Bandipora conducts Awareness Programme under NMBA at GDC Ajas

HT NEWS NETWORK

**BANDIPORA, APRIL 04:** As part of the ongoing activities under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA), an awareness programme was conducted today at Government Degree College (GDC) Ajas to sensitise students about the harmful effects of drug abuse and the importance of adopting a healthy and drug-free lifestyle.



The programme was organised by the Higher Education Department as the nodal department, in collaboration with the Health Department and Youth Services & Sports (YS&S) Department.

The event witnessed active participation from officials, faculty members, college students, higher secondary students and girl students from nearby institutions.

During the programme, resource persons from the Health Department, highlighted the physical, psychological and social consequences of substance abuse. The speakers emphasised the importance of awareness, early prevention and community participation in curbing the growing menace of drug addiction.

The participants were encouraged to stay away from drugs and to act as ambassadors of the anti-drug campaign by spreading awareness among their peers and within their communities.

The programme concluded with a renewed commitment from all stakeholders to work collectively towards achieving the goal of a drug-free society.

## DC Kulgam chairs meeting to strengthen Waste Collection & Segregation under SBM 2.0

HT NEWS NETWORK

**KULGAM, APRIL 04:** Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam today convened a meeting with Community Mobilizers and Self-Help Group (SHG) members engaged under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) 2.0 in Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to review and strengthen the waste collection, segregation and processing mechanism across the district.

During the meeting, the DC highlighted the crucial role of SHGs in ensuring effective waste management and stressed the need for adopting scientific waste management practices to achieve improved sanitation and cleanliness.

SHG members were instructed to take responsibility for waste collection, segregation and processing at their respective levels and to ensure proper collection of user charges from beneficiaries to

sustain these services.

Community Mobilizers were also directed to intensify public awareness regarding segregation of waste at source and proper disposal methods to ensure greater community participation in maintaining cleanliness.

Chief Executive Officer, Municipal Council (MC) Kulgam, along with Executive Officers of various Urban Local Bodies, were present in the meeting.

## DC Budgam reviews developmental scenario of Sub-Division Khansahib

Stresses timely execution, quality delivery & Public-Centric Governance

HT NEWS NETWORK

**BUDGAM, APRIL 04:** Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Athar Aamir Khan, today chaired an extensive review meeting to assess the overall developmental scenario, sectoral progress, and implementation status of key government schemes in Sub-Division Khansahib.

At the outset, the SDM Khansahib, Jahangir Ahmad Giri presented a detailed overview covering key sectors including health, education, public works, power, irrigation, rural development, and urban development. The meeting also reviewed the progress achieved under flagship programmes and UT/centrally sponsored schemes.

A comprehensive review of the health sector was conducted, wherein the DC took note of the ongoing Pradhan Mantri TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan, including screening of vulnerable populations and progress under Nikshay Mitra initiative.

He emphasized strengthening

healthcare delivery at grassroots level, ensuring optimal utilization of health facilities, and improving bed capacity and patient care services in sub-district hospitals and primary health centres.

Reviewing the Public Works Department, the DC was apprised of road connectivity status, sub-division-wise road mileage, and progress under ongoing pothole-free road initiatives.

He directed concerned to ensure time-bound completion of road works, adherence to quality standards, and prioritization of critical connectivity gaps, especially in rural and far-flung areas.

The meeting also discussed works executed under NABARD RIDF, UT sector schemes, and other infrastructure development programmes. The DC stressed expediting pending works and removing bottlenecks hindering progress.

In the education sector, the DC reviewed the functioning of education zones including Khansahib, Dreygam, and Hardupanzoo. He directed officers

to focus on improving learning outcomes, strengthening school infrastructure, and ensuring regular monitoring of attendance and academic performance.

The progress under PMAY (G) 2.0 and Awaas Plus Survey 2024 was also reviewed in detail. The DC instructed officials to ensure transparency in beneficiary selection and timely completion of sanctioned houses, so that eligible beneficiaries receive the intended benefits without delay.

In power sector, the DC assessed the status of works under various schemes including CDF and other electrification initiatives. He emphasized ensuring uninterrupted power supply, prompt grievance redressal, and timely completion of ongoing works.

In the water and irrigation sector, the DC reviewed the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and irrigation projects in the sub-division. He directed officers to ensure 100% household tap water coverage, proper maintenance of assets, and efficient execution of irrigation works to

support agricultural productivity. The DC also took stock of development works under urban development and tourism-related initiatives, including activities linked to Doodhpatri Development Authority. He stressed promoting sustainable tourism while ensuring environmental protection and local economic benefits.

Special focus was laid on submission of DPRs for heritage sites and monuments, wherein the DC directed timely preparation and submission to preserve cultural assets and boost tourism potential.

During the meeting, major demands and grievances of the local population were also discussed in detail. These included improvement of road connectivity, augmentation of healthcare facilities, enhancement of power supply, drinking water issues, and need for additional infrastructure in education and irrigation sectors.

Addressing the officers, the DC issued directions for ensuring time-bound completion of all ongoing projects, maintaining highest standards of quality and

transparency, strengthening inter-departmental coordination, prioritizing public grievances and field-level responsiveness, conducting regular field visits and inspections, and ensuring optimum utilization of government resources.

The DC emphasized that development must be visible, inclusive, and impactful, reaching every section of society. He reiterated that officers must work with dedication and accountability to deliver results on ground.

He further stressed the importance of people-centric governance, urging officers to remain accessible, responsive, and proactive in addressing public issues. The DC directed all the departments to submit updated progress reports and ensure strict adherence to timelines for all developmental works.

Besides, JD planning, SDM Khansahib, SER&B circle Budgam, ACD, ACP, CMO, CEO, all Tehsildars, BDOs, Executive Engineers, EOs and other concerned officers of the Sub-Division were present in the meeting.

# Judicial Academy Srinagar hosts Training on Fair and Speedy Trial under Article 21 for Judicial Officers

HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, APRIL 04:** Under the patronage of Justice Arun Palli, Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh (Patron-in-Chief, J&K Judicial Academy), and under the guidance of the Chairperson and Members of the Governing Committee of the J&K Judicial Academy, a one-day training programme on "Role and Responsibilities of Trial Judges in Ensuring Just, Fair and Speedy Trial (as guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India)" was successfully conducted today at the Jammu & Kashmir Judicial Academy, Mominabad, Srinagar, for Judicial Officers of the Kashmir Province.

Justice Shahzad Azeem, Judge, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, in his inaugural address, highlighted the pivotal role of trial courts in the justice delivery system, observing that they serve as the first point of interaction between citizens and the judiciary, where facts are established, evidence is tested, and rights are ultimately adjudicated. He emphasized that while the maxim "justice delayed is justice denied" remains significant, equal caution must be exercised to ensure that "justice hurried is justice buried." He stressed that the real challenge before trial judges lies in maintaining a delicate balance between expedition and fairness.

Describing the role of judicial officers as a "sacred trusteeship," He called upon them to act as reformers by embracing technology, minimizing delays, and upholding



the principles of fairness, efficiency, and human dignity in the administration of justice.

Naseer Ahmad Dar, Director, J&K Judicial Academy, in his introductory address, underscored that the theme of the programme lies at the very core of the constitutional guarantee under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. He highlighted that trial courts form the foundation of the justice delivery system and that trial judges play a crucial role in ensuring that the promise of a just, fair, and speedy trial is meaningfully realized in every courtroom. He

further informed that the programme had been specifically designed in light of the guidance of Justice Rahul Bharti, with particular focus on judicial officers who have joined service without prior practice at the Bar.

The first technical session on "Constitutional Mandate and Foundations (Fair Trial under Article 21 of the Constitution of India)" was delivered by Dr. Syed Asima Refai, Faculty Member, Department of Law, University of Kashmir.

In her address, she traced the historical evolution of the right to

a fair trial, emphasizing its deep roots in ancient legal traditions, including Roman, Greek, and various religious legal systems. She highlighted that the principle of fair trial has long been recognized as a foundational element of justice across civilizations and was later institutionalized through landmark developments such as the Magna Carta, which laid the foundation for limiting arbitrary state power and establishing early human rights protections. She also discussed the transformative constitutional journey from A.K. Gopalan v. State of Madras to Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, highlighting how the judiciary expanded the scope of "procedure established by law" to mean a procedure that is just, fair, and reasonable.

The second session, conducted by Abdul Rashid Malik, Former District & Sessions Judge, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, focused on "Practical Challenges before Trial Courts." He deliberated on critical issues such as delays in trials, effective case management, handling adjournments and hostile witnesses, and the use of technology in trial courts. He emphasized the importance of judicial diligence and systematic court management, stressing that judges must carefully examine jurisdiction, applicability of law, and relevant materials before issuing orders. In the context of criminal trials, he highlighted the necessity of ensuring that charge sheets are complete, all relevant documents and witness statements are available, and that the accused is provided with adequate legal representation. The session offered

valuable practical insights into enhancing efficiency while maintaining fairness in trial proceedings.

The concluding session was delivered by Justice B.A. Kirmani, Former Judge, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, on "Judicial Conduct, Ethics and Best Practices." He emphasized that constitutional principles serve as a unifying framework ensuring consistency, objectivity, and integrity in the administration of justice. He observed that the role of a judge requires a transformation wherein personal identity yields to a judicial persona, thereby upholding institutional dignity and maintaining public confidence in the judiciary. His Lordship further noted that judicial power is not absolute but is exercised within a broader legal and moral framework, where judges function as instruments of justice rather than arbiters of personal will. He urged judicial officers to look beyond procedural technicalities and appreciate the human dimension underlying every case, recognizing that each matter represents a significant concern for the litigant.

The programme concluded with an interactive session and feedback, wherein participants actively engaged with the resource persons, sharing practical experiences and discussing challenges faced in trial courts. The interaction provided a valuable platform for the exchange of ideas and the identification of effective solutions to further strengthen trial processes.

## ADDC Shopian reviews progress of social security & government sponsored schemes in district

HT NEWS NETWORK

**SHOPIAN, APRIL 04:** Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Shopian, Dr Nasir Ahmad Lone today chaired a review meeting at the Mini Secretariat, Shopian to assess the progress achieved under various Government Sponsored Schemes and Social Security Schemes in the district.



A detailed review of scheme wise performance was carried out, with particular focus on enrollment under key schemes including PMJJBY, PMSBY, APY, PMJDY and disbursement under Mission YUVA, PMEGP, and other beneficiary oriented programmes.

During the deliberations, the ADDC emphasized the need for efficient, transparent, and target driven implementation of all schemes to ensure timely delivery of benefits to eligible beneficiaries.

ADDC directed all Bank Branch Heads to ensure prompt and hassle free disbursement of sanctioned cases without any hindrance, stressing that delays at any stage are unacceptable. He urged banks to adopt a proactive and facilitative approach, particularly in cases related to self employment and livelihood generation schemes.

Further, the ADDC instructed all concerned departments and banks to strengthen coordination and maintain regular follow ups to improve disbursement performance and resolve bottlenecks in a time bound manner.

Highlighting accountability, the ADDC directed officers to identify gaps, streamline processes, and take corrective measures for enhancing outreach and effectiveness of the schemes.

## SVEEP IEC Van flagged-off in Ganderbal to raise awareness on Panchayat Electoral Roll Revision 2026

HT NEWS NETWORK

**GANDERBAL, APRIL 04:** To enhance public awareness regarding the ongoing Annual Revision of Panchayat Electoral Roll 2026, the District Administration Ganderbal today flagged off a SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) IEC Van.

The IEC vehicle was flagged-off by the Assistant Commissioner Revenue Ganderbal, Dr. Sheikh Salahu Ud Din, along with Deputy District Election Officer Ganderbal, Abdul Rahman.

The initiative is aimed at spreading awareness among the general public about the electoral roll revision process, including registration of new voters, correction of entries, deletion of ineligible names, and inclusion of eligible citizens in the Panchayat electoral rolls.

The IEC Van will travel across all Panchayat Halqas of the district, reaching voters at the grassroots level and informing them about the importance of participation in the electoral process and the procedures involved in the revision.

The District Administration reiterated its commitment to ensuring a transparent, inclusive, and participatory revision process and urged all eligible citizens to take part and verify that their names are correctly entered in the Panchayat Electoral Roll.

# 3-Day Training Programme for Charge Officers for Phase-I of Census 2027 commences in Baramulla

HT NEWS NETWORK

**BARAMULLA, APRIL 4:** A three-day training programme for Charge Officers for Phase-I of Census 2027 (House Listing and Housing Census - HLO) commenced today at the DC Office Baramulla at the main meeting hall of DC office Baramulla.

The programme is being organized by the Principal Census Officer (Deputy Commissioner) Baramulla under the aegis of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, and



Directorate of Census Operations, J&K.

The training is being conducted under the supervision of Arun Kumar, Joint Director/Joint Chief Principal Census Officer (DCO), J&K and Ladakh. Rohini Pokharel and Vijay Kumar, Assistant Directors/Nodal Officers, Harishchandra Chauhan and Vikash Kumar, District Coordinating Officers, Baramulla also took part in the training programme.

The programme, scheduled for April 3, 4, and 7, 2026, is being attended by District, Sub-

Divisional and Additional Charge Officers of Baramulla district. During the training, participants are being sensitized about their roles and responsibilities in the upcoming national wide census exercise.

Interactive sessions and practical demonstrations were conducted to ensure effective understanding of the House Listing and Housing Census operations. The initiative aims to ensure smooth and efficient conduct of Phase-I of Census 2027 across the district.

## Anantnag Schools lead strong Anti-Drug Drive with Awareness Programmes and Nukkad Natak

HT NEWS NETWORK

**ANANTNAG, APRIL 04:** In a decisive and mission-driven initiative towards fostering a drug-free society, a series of Awareness Programmes cum Nukkad Natak Presentations were successfully organized across various Educational Institutions of District Anantnag.

The initiative witnessed overwhelming participation from

students, teachers, and members of the local community, reflecting a strong collective resolve to combat the growing menace of drug abuse. The programmes served as a dynamic platform to educate, sensitize, and mobilize young minds and society at large.

Through compelling awareness sessions, thought-provoking Nukkad Natak performances, and solemn pledge-taking ceremonies, participants effectively conveyed powerful

messages on the dangers of drug addiction, the importance of informed choices, and the need for community vigilance. The street plays, in particular, captivated audiences and left a lasting impact by portraying real-life consequences of substance abuse and the path towards recovery and responsible living.

The initiative stands as a testament to the unwavering commitment of the School Education Department,

Anantnag, in nurturing a safe, aware, and resilient generation. It also underscores the importance of collaborative community engagement in addressing social challenges and safeguarding the future of youth.

Such sustained efforts reaffirm the department's dedication to creating a protective and empowering educational environment, while actively contributing to the larger vision of a healthy, drug-free society.

## TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan: 100-Day Campaign continues across Pulwama

HT NEWS NETWORK

**PULWAMA, APRIL 04:** Under the ongoing TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan - 100-Day Campaign, a series of health awareness and screening Shivirs were successfully organised across various locations of District Pulwama by the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) Pulwama to strengthen tuberculosis screening and awareness.

The Shivirs were conducted at Babhara, Drabgam, Dogripora, Panzgam, Niloora, Kuchmullah, Naner, Main Pulwama, Tral and Pampore among others with the objective of early detection, awareness, and prevention of Tuberculosis (TB) and other health conditions.

During these Shivirs, a significant number of people participated and were screened for TB-related symptoms. On-the-spot counselling, sputum sample collection, and referrals for further diagnostic tests, including chest X-rays, were facilitated. The medical



teams also sensitised the public about the importance of early diagnosis, adherence to treatment, and the availability of treatment services under the NTEP.

The health department has urged the general public to actively participate in such health initiatives and avail the services being provided.

## DC Budgam reviews Developmental Projects, key public issues of Sub-division Beerwah

Stresses on timely completion of projects in Sub-Division

HT NEWS NETWORK

**BUDGAM, APRIL 04:** Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam Athar Aamir Khan today convened a comprehensive review meeting to assess the progress of developmental projects and address key public issues in Sub-Division Beerwah.

The meeting covered all major sectors and departments, with a detailed overview of the administrative and infrastructural landscape of the sub-division, which comprises four tehsils (Beerwah, Khag, Magam, Narbal), 162 revenue villages, six blocks, two municipalities, and multiple health and engineering divisions.

The chair was apprised by SDM

beerwah, Taufeeq Gazi, regarding various departments aspects of Sub-division Beerwah. Threadbare discussions were held on several road projects, vital ongoing bridges, Revenue Buildings at Magam, Narbal and Poshker, status of several Water Supply Schemes, Plastic Waste Management Unit at Rathsun Panchayat Ghar Mangund, Panchayat Ghar Najan Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant at Goripora, establishment of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV), shifting of HT Line over Beerwah Bridge, Illegal extraction in Nallah Sukhnag, regulation of brick kilns, hospitals of Magam, Khag and Beerwah, ATM in SK pora block, street lights repair, upgradation of casualty block of

SDH Magam etc.

The DC stressed the need for strict adherence to timelines and directed all departments to adopt a proactive and result-oriented approach. He emphasized that inter-departmental coordination is crucial for timely execution of projects and resolution of public issues.

He further instructed officers to conduct regular field visits, closely monitor progress on the ground, and ensure that bottlenecks are identified and addressed promptly.

The DC reiterated that delivery of essential services to the public must not be compromised and called for enhanced accountability at all levels.

He also directed all officers of

the concerned division to submit a comprehensive list of issues and projects hampering the development of the area.

The DC stated that the identified concerns will be duly addressed and incorporated into the upcoming district plans for timely redressal.

The meeting concluded with directions to ensure early completion of all ongoing works and improved grievance redressal mechanisms across the sub-division.

Besides, PO ICDS Budgam, SDM Beerwah, JD planning Budgam, SE R&B circle budgam, ACD, ACP, CMO, CEO, all Tehsildars, all BDOs, all Executive Engineers, all EOs and other concerned officers of the sub-division were present in the meeting.

HT EDITORIAL

Introduce more job oriented courses at the higher education level

The Jammu & Kashmir legislative assembly on Saturday passed the Private Universities Bill with a voice vote. The passage of the bill is significant since it envisages establishment of private universities in the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir. The passing of the bill means that any individual or group desirous of setting up a university in Jammu & Kashmir can do so with proper permission from the government.

The bill has been passed at a time when the enrolment of students in the degree colleges of the union territory has witnessed a tremendous dip. According to the official figures more than 50 percent seats are vacant in the degree colleges of Jammu & Kashmir. Same can be said about the admission scenario in the universities operating in the union territory. There are many departments or faculties in the universities where seats are vacant and students are not willing to take admission.

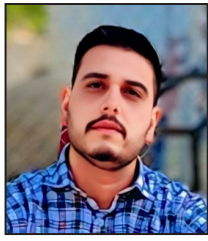
The basic reason for the lack of interest among students in getting admission at the colleges or universities is that there are just few job oriented courses available to them. As on date there are very few students who are enthused to take admission in the regular courses. Most of the students want to earn as soon as they come out of the colleges or universities. There are many among them who want to earn while being a student. In such a scenario there are very few takers for the regular courses.

Given the fact that private universities can now come up in Jammu & Kashmir there are umpteen chances that scores of educated but unskilled youth would come out of such universities. It is due to this reason that highly qualified youth apply for class IV jobs as and when they are advertised by the government in the different departments. In such a manner the posts meant for less qualified candidates are at times occupied by the people who could have contributed to the growth and success of the society.

Lack of an organized private sector is yet another factor responsible for unemployment in Jammu & Kashmir. It is imperative that both the government and the private players chip in and play their part in providing employment opportunities to the qualified youth of Jammu & Kashmir. This would give a new dimension to the job opportunities to the youth who get degrees in the different professional courses.

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Pride Today, Accountability Tomorrow



JAWAID IQBAL

In an age defined by self-promotion, digital vanity, and an ever-expanding culture of ego, one question emerges with piercing clarity: Why attitude? Why does man, a being so fragile in origin and so finite in existence, carry himself with an air of superiority? Has humanity forgotten its beginning—and more importantly, its end? In the race for recognition and dominance, it appears that many have distanced themselves from the very truths that define their existence, truths clearly articulated in the Holy Qur'an.

The Qur'an, revered by over a billion people as the literal word of Allah, provides a profound account of human origin—one that is both humbling and enlightening. It reminds mankind not of its imagined grandeur, but of its modest beginnings. In Surah Al-Mu'minin (23:12-14), Allah declares that man was created from an extract of clay, then placed as a drop of fluid (nutfah) in a secure place, then transformed into a clot (alaqah), then into a lump (mudghah), bones, and finally clothed with flesh. This gradual formation is not merely a biological process; it is a spiritual reminder of humility.

How, then, does a being created from clay—fragile, dependent, and temporary—develop arrogance? The Qur'an repeatedly cautions against pride, for it is the very trait that led to the downfall of Iblis (Satan), who refused to bow to Adam out of arrogance. In Surah Al-Isra (17:37), it is stated: "And do not walk upon the earth exultantly. Indeed, you will never reach the mountains in height." This verse serves as a timeless admonition: no matter how high one rises, one remains bound by the limitations of creation.

The illusion of superiority often stems from temporary possessions—wealth, status, beauty, or intellect. Yet, these are fleeting. The Qur'an consistently redirects attention from the transient to the eternal. It asks man to reflect: what is the value of pride when the body itself will return to dust? In Surah Taha (20:55), Allah states: "From it We created you, and into it We will return you, and from it We will extract you another time." This cyclical reality—creation, death, and resurrection—defines the human journey.

Death, often avoided in conversation, is the most certain event in human life. It is not an end, but a transition. The Qur'an describes it not as annihilation, but as a passage into another realm—the Hereafter (Akhirah). In Surah Al-Ankabut (29:57), it is clearly stated: "Every soul will taste death. Then to Us you will be returned." This return is not symbolic; it is literal and inevitable.

After death, according to Islamic belief, the soul



enters a phase known as Barzakh—an intermediate state between this world and the Day of Judgment. It is a realm unseen, yet real, where the soul experiences a foretaste of its final abode. The righteous find peace, while the unjust encounter difficulty. This stage underscores accountability; life is not without consequence.

The final destination, as described in the Qur'an, is determined by one's deeds. The Day of Judgment (Yawm al-Qiyamah) is the moment when all actions—public and private, major and minor—are brought forth. In Surah Az-Zalzalah (99:7-8), it is stated: "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it." This divine justice leaves no room for arrogance, for even the smallest act carries weight.

The ultimate abodes are Paradise (Jannah) and Hell (Jahannam). Paradise is described as a place of eternal peace, beauty, and reward for those who lived with faith and righteousness. Hell, conversely, is a place of consequence for those who rejected truth and indulged in (in)justice. These are not mere metaphors; they are realities emphasized repeatedly in the Qur'an to guide human behavior.

Given this framework, the question resurfaces with greater urgency: Why attitude? What justifies pride in a life so temporary, in a body so fragile, in a world so fleeting? The Qur'an does not deny human dignity; rather, it defines it. True honor lies not in arrogance, but in humility and consciousness of Allah (taqwa). In Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13), it is stated: "Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you."

Modern society, however, often equates confidence with arrogance, self-worth with superiority,

and success with dominance. This distortion has led to a culture where humility is mistaken for weakness. Yet, the Qur'anic perspective is unequivocal: humility is strength, for it aligns (the human being) with truth.

To remember Allah and His Qur'an is not merely a ritualistic act; it is a transformative awareness. It reshapes priorities, tempers ego, and instills a sense of purpose. The who remembers his origin—from clay—and his destination—before Allah—cannot afford to be arrogant. He walks the earth not with pride, but with responsibility.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exemplified this humility. Despite being the most honored of, he lived simply, spoke gently, and served others. His life stands as a practical of the Qur'an—a demonstration that greatness lies in character, not in status.

In conclusion, the question "Why attitude?" is not merely rhetorical; it is a moral challenge. It calls for introspection. It urges humanity to reconnect with its origin, to acknowledge its, and to realign its conduct with divine guidance. The Qur'an provides not only answers, but direction.

Man was created from dust, lives for a brief moment, and returns to his Creator. Between these two certainties lies a test—a test of humility, faith, and action. To forget this is to lose oneself in illusion. To remember it is to walk the path of truth.

And perhaps, in that remembrance, arrogance dissolves—replaced by a quiet, profound humility that defines true human greatness.

The writer is a Teacher from Kupwara District

Tourism On Mighty Chenab River



MOOL RAJ

Adventure tourism is not just about seeking thrills; it's about embracing the unknown, pushing boundaries, and immersing oneself in nature's raw beauty. It's a chance to step out of our comfort zones and embark on unforgettable journeys that leave us feeling alive and invigorated. And when it comes to championing adventure tourism, few endeavours epitomize the spirit of exploration quite like a river rafting expedition.

In the heart of the Kishtwar district in Jammu and Kashmir, nestled along the banks of the mighty Chenab River, lies Gulabgarh Paddar—a haven for adventure enthusiasts and nature lovers alike. Here, against the backdrop of towering mountains and pristine wilderness, a collaborative effort has unfolded to unveil an exhilarating two-week river rafting expedition—an initiative that not only promises adrenaline-pumping excitement but also celebrates the untamed beauty of the natural world. At the forefront of this endeavour are adventure enthusiasts and stakeholders who share a common passion for promoting tourism in the region. Spearheaded by organizations like Asikini Adventures and Extreme Adventures, this collaborative effort represents a fusion of expertise, enthusiasm, and dedica-



tion to showcasing the immense potential of Gulabgarh Paddar as a premier adventure tourism destination. But what sets this river rafting expedition apart is not just the thrill of conquering the rapids or the breathtaking scenery along the way—it's the spirit of collaboration and community that underpins the entire venture. From local businesses and tourism operators to government agencies and environmental organizations, this initiative has brought together a diverse array of stakeholders who are united in their commitment to showcasing the beauty and bounty of Gulabgarh Paddar to the world. One of the most remarkable aspects of this expedition is its emphasis on sustainability and responsible tourism practices. In an age where environmental conservation is of paramount importance, the organizers have taken great care to ensure that the expedition has minimal impact on the fragile ecosystem of the Chenab River. Through

initiatives such as waste management, eco-friendly practices, and community engagement, they are not only preserving the natural beauty of the region but also fostering a culture of environmental stewardship among visitors and locals alike. But perhaps the most compelling aspect of this expedition is the sense of camaraderie and shared adventure that it fosters among participants. As individuals from all walks of life come together to navigate the rapids, set up camp under the starry skies, and share stories around the campfire, bonds are formed, memories are made, and lifelong friendships are forged. In an increasingly divided world, where differences often overshadow our common humanity, experiences like these remind us of the power of unity, connection, and shared experiences. As we reflect on the significance of this collaborative effort, it's clear that initiatives like the Gulabgarh Paddar river rafting expedition are more than

just recreational pursuits—they are catalysts for change, drivers of economic growth, and ambassadors for peace and understanding. By showcasing the natural wonders of the region and fostering meaningful interactions between people of different backgrounds and cultures, they have the power to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and build bridges of mutual respect and appreciation. But perhaps most importantly, they remind us of the transformative power of adventure—the ability to transcend our limitations, expand our horizons, and tap into the boundless potential that lies within each of us. Whether we're navigating the swirling currents of a roaring river or scaling the towering peaks of a majestic mountain, adventure has a way of unlocking our innermost fears, doubts, and insecurities, and empowering us to embrace life with courage, confidence, and a sense of wonder.

Finally, the Gulabgarh Paddar river rafting expedition is not just about conquering rapids or reaching a destination—it's about embarking on a journey of self-discovery, growth, and transformation. It's about embracing the unknown, pushing our limits, and embracing the beauty and bounty of the natural world. And as we navigate the twists and turns of the river, both literally and metaphorically, may we find the courage to face whatever challenges lie ahead, the wisdom to appreciate the moments of beauty and serenity along the way, and the grace to cherish the connections we forge with our fellow adventurers.

The author is a columnist and freelance writer

# Morning assembly soothes the mind

Education and the Importance of Morning Assembly in Educational Institutes



■ SAHIL MANZOOR

Education is widely regarded as the key to success because it opens doors to countless opportunities and shapes the future of individuals as well as the nation. It equips young minds with knowledge, skills, discipline, and the ability to think critically. In modern society, education is not merely about reading books and passing examinations; it is about building character, developing confidence, and preparing individuals to contribute meaningfully to the world. For this reason, acquiring education is considered a fundamental right, and governments across the country have introduced numerous schemes to ensure that even the most underprivileged sections of society can access it.

Today, education is available for every stage of life. From early childhood education for three-year-olds to higher studies such as postgraduate and doctoral degrees, the system provides opportunities for anyone willing to learn and grow. Scholarships, free textbooks, midday meal schemes, digital learning initiatives, and special programs for girls and marginalized communities are some of the steps taken to ensure that education reaches every household. These initiatives not only improve literacy but also inspire young people to dream big and work toward prestigious careers such as civil services, defence, medicine, engineering, teaching, research, and entrepreneurship.

However, education is not about studying for twenty-four hours a day. Quality always matters more than quantity. Concentration is the most important factor in effective learning. A focused study schedule of five to six hours daily, combined with proper rest and recreation, can lead students toward their goals more efficiently than long, tiring hours of unfocused study. Life is precious and limited; therefore, it must be lived with passion, balance, and purpose. Students should set goals not only for personal success but also for the progress of their families and the nation. While choosing career paths, consulting parents,

teachers, and experienced mentors can help young learners make wise decisions and avoid confusion.

Among the many aspects of education, co-curricular activities play an essential role in shaping a student's personality. One of the most powerful and meaningful of these activities is the morning assembly in educational institutions. Morning assembly is far more than a routine gathering. It is a daily platform that brings together students and teachers, encourages discipline, spreads knowledge, and nurtures talent. It sets the tone for the entire day and creates a positive atmosphere within the school.

■ **Morning Assembly as a Platform for Talent**

Morning assembly offers students a stage to showcase their hidden abilities. Every child possesses unique talents, but many hesitate to express themselves in classrooms. Assembly provides a safe and encouraging environment where students can perform speeches, recitations, songs, skits, or presentations. When students perform before their peers, they gain confidence, overcome stage fear, and learn the art of communication.

This platform also helps teachers identify the strengths and interests of students. Some students may excel in public speaking, others in music, acting, or leadership. Recognizing these talents early allows teachers to guide students toward suitable opportunities and encourage them to develop their skills further.

■ **Interaction Between Teachers and Students**

Morning assembly strengthens the bond between teachers and students. It creates a shared space where everyone gathers without the formal barriers of the classroom. Teachers can address important issues, share announcements, appreciate achievements, and motivate students with inspiring messages. This daily interaction builds trust, respect, and a sense of belonging within the school community.

Moreover, assemblies help students feel connected to their institution. They begin the day together, listen to common messages, and develop a sense of unity and teamwork.

■ **Spreading Knowledge Efficiently**

Another major benefit of morning assembly is the quick dissemination of information. Important announcements, updates, and general knowledge can be shared with the entire school in a short time. Students often present "thought of the day," news headlines, or short educational talks. These activities help students stay informed about national and international events, scientific discoveries, environmental issues, and social developments.



Such exposure encourages curiosity and awareness. It motivates students to read newspapers, watch educational programs, and stay updated with the world around them. In this way, morning assembly becomes a daily learning session beyond textbooks.

■ **Moral and Cultural Development**

Morning assembly plays a vital role in the moral and cultural development of students. Schools often include moral stories, value-based speeches, and discussions on social issues such as honesty, kindness, respect, and responsibility. Students learn the importance of empathy, teamwork, and ethical behavior.

Cultural programs during assemblies such as traditional dances, songs, and festival celebrations help preserve heritage and promote respect for diversity. Students learn about different cultures, traditions, and values, which fosters harmony and mutual understanding.

■ **The Role of Morning Prayer**

Morning prayer is an essential part of many assemblies. When students gather to pray, they begin the day with gratitude and positivity. Prayer encourages calmness, focus, and spiritual well-being. It reminds students to be humble, thankful, and hopeful. Regardless of individual beliefs, the act of collective prayer or reflection instills a sense of peace and unity.

■ **Physical Fitness Through Exercise**

Physical health is just as important as academic success. Morning assembly often includes physical exercises, stretching, or yoga sessions. These activities energize students, improve flexibility, and enhance concentration. Starting the day with physical movement helps students stay active, alert, and ready to learn.

Regular exercise also teaches discipline and promotes healthy habits that students can carry into adulthood.

■ **Encouraging Discipline and Time Management**

Daily assembly teaches punctuality and discipline. Students must arrive on time, stand in proper lines, follow instructions, and participate respectfully. These habits shape responsible individuals who value time and order.

Discipline learned through small daily routines often reflects in academic perfor-

mance and personal behavior. Students gradually understand the importance of organization, teamwork, and responsibility.

■ **Promoting Hygiene and Cleanliness**

At the end of the assembly, teachers often check the hygiene of students ensuring clean uniforms, trimmed nails, and proper grooming. This practice instills awareness about personal hygiene and environmental cleanliness. Students learn that cleanliness is essential for health and self-respect.

By emphasizing hygiene, schools help students adopt habits that prevent illness and promote well-being.

■ **Building Confidence and Leadership**

Morning assembly provides leadership opportunities for students who organize and conduct the program. Anchoring the assembly, leading prayers, managing announcements, or coordinating performances helps students develop leadership skills. They learn responsibility, teamwork, and decision making.

These experiences prepare students for future challenges and make them confident individuals capable of leading others.

■ **Conclusion**

Education is a powerful tool that shapes individuals and transforms societies. It provides knowledge, builds character, and opens doors to endless possibilities. While academic learning is essential, holistic development requires activities that nurture physical, emotional, social, and moral growth.

Morning assembly plays a crucial role in achieving this balanced development. It is a daily ritual that promotes discipline, unity, confidence, physical fitness, moral values, and awareness. It brings students and teachers together, creates a positive start to the day, and provides a platform for talent and leadership.

In conclusion, morning assembly is not just a routine gathering it is the heartbeat of an educational institution. By participating actively in assemblies, students learn life lessons that go far beyond textbooks and examinations. These lessons help them grow into responsible, confident, and capable citizens who contribute positively to society and the nation.

sahilmanzoor411990@gmail.com

# Every Medal has a Story!



■ MS NAZKI

What is a medal? It may seem like a small piece of metal, yet its worth is immeasurable. Only those who earn it truly understand its value. A medal worn on the chest is far more than decoration—it is a profound symbol of dedication, sacrifice, and courage. It represents years of discipline, resilience, and, in many cases, the ultimate sacrifices made in service to a nation or a cause.

Every medal carries within it a story. It becomes a living testimony of courage, camaraderie, and duty. These honors preserve history, ensuring that moments of bravery and sacrifice are never forgotten. They are not simply given; they are earned—often through pain, risk, and relentless effort—making them a "chest full of honour" and a distinction beyond rank.

In both sports and service, medals signify the triumph over immense challenges—physical, emotional, and operational. They also carry deep emotional value for families. When next of kin wear the medals of fallen heroes, they carry forward a legacy of pride and remembrance.

The stories behind these medals are countless. From Jammu & Kashmir alone, inspiring examples stand tall. Sheetal Devi, born without arms, rose to become the World Archery Para Archer of the Year 2025, using her feet to script history. Tajamul Islam, from humble beginnings, con-

quered the global stage by winning gold at the World Kickboxing Championship at just 13. Rutba Showkat from Srinagar has earned over 60 medals in martial arts while also setting a Guinness World Record. Even historically, the region has seen valor honored through medals like the Hunza Nagar Badge (1891) and the Jammu & Kashmir Medal (1895), instituted by the Dogra rulers. In recent times, the evolution of police medals post-2019 reflects changing symbols but enduring values of service and bravery. These stories echo one truth—resilience and courage define greatness.

Every medal has a story, often hidden behind silence and humility. It is in the firsthand accounts of gallantry awardees that we truly understand the weight of these honors. Their split-second decisions, selfless actions, and unwavering resolve embody the spirit of excellence. The indomitable spirit of the Indian soldier stands as a shining example.

One such story is that of Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat, whose bravery during the 1962 conflict in Arunachal Pradesh remains legendary. At the icy heights of Nuranang, when his platoon was ordered to retreat under heavy enemy fire, Jaswant chose to stay back. Alongside Lance Naik Trilok Singh Negi and Rifleman Gopal Singh Gusain, he crawled through treacherous terrain to capture an enemy machine gun. Though his comrades fell in battle, Jaswant continued alone, holding off the enemy for 72 hours. Using clever tactics, he created the illusion of a larger force and stalled an advancing company. When reinforcements arrived, they discovered that one man had defended the post. Jaswant made the supreme sacrifice, but his spirit lives on. The Indian Army continues to honor him as a serving soldier, a tribute to courage that transcends life itself.

Behind every medal lies an unseen jour-



ney—of discipline, pain, and perseverance. Families often play a silent yet crucial role. Athletes like Saina Nehwal rose to prominence through the sacrifices of their parents, who invested time, energy, and resources into their dreams. Mentors and supporters, often unrecognized, form the backbone of many such successes.

Every medal also tells a story of resilience. It reflects comebacks from injuries, failures, and hardships. Olympic medalist Manu Bhaker attributes success to relentless hard work and belief, while boxing legend Mary Kom has often said that each of her medals carries a story of struggle, especially while balancing responsibilities beyond the ring.

Medals are not always individual triumphs—they are shared victories. Events

like the Tata Mumbai Marathon allow participants to dedicate their medals to those who inspired them, reinforcing that success is rarely achieved alone.

Historically, the journey of Indian military medals reflects the nation's evolution. From the East India Company's awards in 1757 to the institution of India's own gallantry honors after independence, medals have symbolized valor across eras. On January 26, 1950, India established its highest wartime gallantry awards—Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra, and Vir Chakra. Later, peacetime awards like Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra, and Shaurya Chakra were introduced, along with distinguished service medals.

These honors recognize extraordinary

bravery, devotion to duty, and distinguished service. The process of awarding them involves rigorous recommendation, verification, and final approval by the President of India, with announcements typically made on Republic Day and Independence Day.

Yet, bravery is not limited to the battlefield. Civilians too have demonstrated extraordinary courage, often risking their lives to save others. Their stories remind us that heroism knows no uniform.

Shravan Singh, a 10-year-old from Punjab, supported soldiers during a tense situation by providing water and food in extreme heat, earning recognition as the "youngest civil warrior." Dishant Mehndiratta displayed remarkable courage by disarming an attacker threatening his family. Young Ruchitha saved her fellow students from an oncoming train with incredible presence of mind. Gaurav Sahasrabudde sacrificed his life while saving friends from drowning. Mamta Dalai fought a crocodile to save her sister. Ramdinthara risked electrocution to rescue two boys. Harekala Hajabba built a school for underprivileged children using his life savings. Netravati Chavan and Shivansh Singh gave their lives trying to save others, while Arjun Singh fought a tiger to protect his family.

Each of these individuals proved that courage can emerge in the most ordinary circumstances, transforming lives forever.

Ultimately, a medal is far more than an award. It is a symbol of belief—the belief that determination can overcome adversity, that sacrifice has meaning, and that the human spirit is capable of extraordinary feats. Every medal tells a story of struggle, resilience, and triumph—a reminder that the person in the mirror is capable of anything. Stories are many, and countless remain untold. We shall return to them another time.

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# Ginger packet with immense health benefits

■ SAHIL MANZOOR BHATTI

Today we are experiencing the cold days of winter, so it is common to get involved in a number of health-related issues like cold, throat infections, cough and many more.

So, try ginger every day in your food items and take a sufficient quantity of ginger for better health.

Our body needs an adequate amount of food and all the basic components of food. These include minerals, vitamins, fiber, fats, etc. Humans are the most beautiful creatures of the Almighty in this universe. The Almighty has bestowed upon us infinite blessings in various forms, whether it's food items, natural objects or the whole environment that covers us like a blanket.

Today I am going to highlight the health benefits of ginger (adrak). Ginger has immense health benefits such as: it helps to detox our body, it has antibiotic properties, and it can help with the prevention of cancer.

(Note: Some lines mentioned "garlic," but your title is about ginger. If you want, I can correct that fully.)

We are exposed to a wide range of chemicals and compounds daily while living in the world. Many of these compounds are not healthy and may even be harmful to the body. The environment, water and food include: personal care products containing chemicals, household cleaners, radiation from nuclear plants, pesticides and chemicals used in agriculture.

Garlic is a powerful detox food that promotes glutathione production by liver enzymes. It provides important detoxifying components, including multiple bioactive selenium and sulphur compounds.

Garlic has antibiotic properties. Garlic contains allicin. Allicin is a bioactive antibiotic that can fight infections and bacteria in sliced, crushed or diced cloves. Garlic extracts have been shown to suppress the growth of protozoa, viral infections, and numerous bacteria like Salmonella, as well as fungal elements. Allicin is believed to be a possible antibiotic replacement. It also helps when used along with prescribed antibiotics.

Garlic helps prevent one of the lethal diseases nowadays called cancer (CA). According to research, consuming fresh garlic can help reduce the risk of colon cancer. According to the IOWA Women's Health Study, women who ate garlic regularly along with vegetables and



fruits were 35% less likely to get cancer.

Garlic also helps reduce cholesterol levels. Cholesterol is a fatty component in the blood. There are two kinds of cholesterol: bad LDL cholesterol and good HDL cholesterol. Too much LDL and not enough HDL can cause serious health issues. Garlic has been shown to lower total cholesterol and LDL levels by 10 to 15 percent. Eating garlic does not affect good HDL cholesterol. If you have a family history of heart disease or suffer from heart problems, you should consider adding garlic to your diet.

Garlic helps reduce blood pressure among patients. It is a special spice to include in your diet if you suffer from high blood pressure or hypertension. Even if you do not like the taste of garlic, taking garlic supplements will still give you benefits such as lowering high blood pressure, treating fever and many more. Keep in mind that the amount of supplement you take should equal four cloves of garlic each day.

Dear champs, I care a lot about your health. For God's sake, take fresh and healthy food items. One more thing: exercise is very important for you if you want to stay fit, smart, attractive and healthy.

sahilmanzoor411990@gmail.com

# Nature's Shield: How Antioxidants Protect and Power a Healthy Life



■ DR. SURINDERPAL SINGH

Antioxidants are often described as the body's natural defense system, and for good reason. These remarkable substances, whether naturally occurring or synthetically produced, play a crucial role in protecting our cells from damage caused by harmful molecules known as free radicals. Free radicals are unstable by nature and are generated during normal bodily functions such as digestion and breathing. However, their production is also accelerated by external factors like pollution, smoking, and radiation. When these molecules accumulate, they trigger a damaging process called oxidative stress, which can harm cells, proteins, and even DNA.

In the human body, antioxidants serve as silent protectors, constantly working to neutralize free radicals and prevent cellular damage. Their role is essential in maintaining overall health and well-being. By safeguarding cells, antioxidants slow down the aging process, strengthen the immune system, and significantly reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Without their protective action, the body would be far more vulnerable to early aging, illnesses, and degenerative conditions.

The benefits of antioxidants extend across multiple aspects of health. One of their most significant contributions is in disease prevention. By reducing oxidative stress, they help lower the risk of serious conditions such as cancer, heart disease, and Alzheimer's



disease. In addition, antioxidants enhance the body's immune response, making it more efficient in fighting infections and illnesses. Their anti-aging properties are equally noteworthy, as they help minimize skin damage, reduce wrinkles, and maintain a youthful appearance. Furthermore, antioxidants play a vital role in supporting brain health by protecting brain cells, improving memory, and enhancing cognitive functions.

Nature provides an abundant supply of antioxidants through a variety of foods. Fruits such as berries, oranges, and grapes, along with vegetables like spinach, carrots, and broccoli, are rich in these protective compounds. Other valuable sources include nuts, seeds, green tea, dark chocolate, and whole grains. Essential antioxidants found in these foods include Vitamin C, Vitamin E, beta-carotene, and flavonoids. Maintaining a balanced diet filled with these natural sources is the most effective and safest way to ensure adequate

antioxidant intake.

While natural antioxidants are highly beneficial, artificial or synthetic antioxidants also exist. These are commonly used in dietary supplements like capsules and tablets, as well as in processed foods to extend shelf life. Examples include Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA) and Butylated Hydroxytoluene (BHT). Although these synthetic forms can be useful in certain contexts, excessive consumption may pose health risks. Therefore, natural sources are generally considered the healthier and more reliable option.

In recent years, antioxidants have gained immense popularity in the modern world. This growing interest is driven by multiple factors, including increased exposure to pollution and stress, which heightens the body's need for protection. The rise in lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer has also made people more conscious of their health. Media and health campaigns have further amplified awareness, promoting antioxidant-rich diets and supplements. Additionally, the beauty and skincare industry has embraced antioxidants for their role in enhancing skin health and slowing aging. Scientific research linking oxidative stress to various diseases has further strengthened their importance in daily life.

Ultimately, antioxidants are indispensable for protecting the body and maintaining good health. While modern science offers synthetic alternatives, the most effective and safest approach remains a balanced diet rich in natural foods. In simple terms, antioxidants act like bodyguards for our cells, defending against damage and helping us lead healthier, longer lives.

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



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# Deputy Chief Minister inaugurates Bridge at Bus Stand Jammu

Says Govt committed to public welfare, robust development

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 4:** Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary today inaugurated vital single span RCC Bridge and allied works at Bus Stand, Jammu.

Terming the bridge a significant utility for all regions of Jammu and Kashmir, the Deputy Chief Minister, who was accompanied by local MLA Yudhvir Sethi, said that it will enhance the mobility and transport facilities for the people of J&K. He said that the bridge, damaged during last year floods, was reconstructed in a record time.

"The bridge was not merely a structure but a lifeline for livelihoods, transport and connectivity across Jammu, Kashmir and the Chenab Valley," maintained the Deputy CM.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the government is committed to public welfare and robust development being carried out across the Union Territory.

Addressing a gathering of locals,



members from transport and markets associations and other stakeholders, the Deputy Chief Minister highlighted his determination to infrastructure

development and public welfare with the successful reconstruction and inauguration of a vital bridge in Jammu.

He also acknowledged MLA Yudhvir Sethi's persistent efforts in ensuring timely completion of the project.

Recalling the devastating floods that had washed away the bridge a few months ago, the Deputy Chief Minister among the sense of helplessness noted the stakeholders and the urgent need to restore it.

The Deputy Chief Minister also assured the stakeholders that their other concerns, such as parking issues, traffic regulation and operational challenges at the bus stand, would be addressed promptly. He said that despite challenges, the government has prioritized to ease the public difficulties and deliver on its promises.

MLA Yudhvir Sethi and members from stakeholders also spoke on the occasion and expressed their appreciation for the Deputy Chief Minister and concerned department for ensuring time bound completion of the ambitious project.

# Marh sports infra gets boost: Satish Sharma elaborates upgradation Plans

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 4 :** Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma, today said that the department has taken up several sports related schemes and initiatives for promotion of sports infrastructure in Marh Constituency.

He was replying to a question raised by Legislator Arvind Gupta on behalf of Surinder Kumar in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister said that in Marh constituency, the department has undertaken renovation of playfield Marh for Rs. 1 crore and presently the work is in progress with 50 percent completion. He further said that the work on construction of synthetic volleyball court at High School Suriyachak with an allotted cost of Rs. 15.50 Lakh and development of playfield at Sant Hare Ram Dass Public School Phallian Mandal with an estimated cost of Rs. 31.65 Lakh has also been completed.

The Minister further said that the government degree college Marh has been allotted 51 Kanal and 11 Marla of land at village Dhateryal Marh, where construction of the college building is presently in progress. "As the college is currently functioning in pre-fabricated structures, sports infrastructure such as indoor sports hall, gymnasiums and athletic track will be taken up after completion of the first phase of completion of the college building", he added.

"About 9233 activities related to coaching camps, talent hunt initiatives, scholarships and other activities have been taken up in Jammu district. Besides, 143 sports activities including tournaments of different sports have been conducted in the district from November 2024 to February 2026", informed the Minister.

The Minister also informed about several sports related schemes and initiatives for development of sports infrastructure, organizing district and state level tournaments, providing sports uniform to the students and supporting training programs for young athletes are also being undertaken in the constituency.

The Minister said that awareness and participation programs are also being conducted in school and villages in Marh constituency. He said the constituency is also being benefited from J&K Sport Policy 2022 which emphasizes talent identification, mass participation, structured coaching and incentives for sportspersons. "Regular coaching camps, training Programmes and sports competitions are being organized in collaboration with the recognized sports association, enabling youth to participate in the district, UT and national level events. These sustained efforts have significantly enhanced Youth engagement, encouraged a sports culture and provided a strong platform for the aspiring athletes in the constituency", he added.

# Govt formulates comprehensive R&R plan for Sawalkote Project: Javed Rana

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 4:** The Government has formulated a comprehensive Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) plan for the Sawalkote Hydroelectric Project, taking into account the extent of impact on the local communities.

This was stated by Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana, while replying to a question raised by MLA Pawan Kumar Gupta in the Legislative Assembly, on behalf of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah.

The Minister said that the rehabilitation plan included compensation measures for the landowners and a range of rehabilitation and resettlement entitlements in accordance with the standard practices for all

affected districts. "Therefore it won't be prudent to say that Udhampur district is out of commensurate development benefits," he said.

The Minister informed the House that the project components fall across three districts of Jammu and Kashmir, Ramban, Udhampur and Reasi, with Ramban district bearing the maximum submergence and emerging as the most affected district in the Union Territory.

The Minister further informed that out of the total land requirement of 1,401.35 hectares for the project, Ramban accounts for the largest share at 1,097.55 hectares, followed by Udhampur with 197 hectares and Reasi with 106.8 hectares.

With regard to submergence, it was informed that out of 1,158.75 hectares of total land, Ramban



accounts for 1,030.55 ha (88.94%), Udhampur for 63 ha (5.44%) and Reasi for 65.2 ha, firmly establishing Ramban as the most affected district in the Union Territory. The Minister provided a detailed breakdown of project components

across the three districts. He informed that the diversion tunnel, right abutment of the Dam and right bank tunnels fall under Reasi district, the adit of right bank tunnels, most of the submergence area and other construction facilities fall under Ramban district while the Powerhouse, main tunnel and left abutment of the Dam are located in Udhampur district.

On the question of road connectivity, the Minister noted that the road connecting Jammu city to Ramban is an all-weather road being maintained by NHAI while the road connecting Ramban to Zero Morh is constructed and maintained by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

Regarding the shortest and most logical Pancheri-Lander-Galiote route, the Minister informed that the Detailed Project Report

(DPR) has been prepared based on technically feasible and commercially viable site conditions and has been duly approved by the Central Electricity Authority, Union Ministry of Power, outlining all project features including access roads to various project components.

The Minister further noted that the proposed road from MH Morh to Chakka is a single-lane route with high maintenance costs and would not be suitable for transportation of heavy machinery and equipment required for construction of the project. He added that the selection of access roads depends on detailed engineering and economic considerations and any change at a later stage could result in construction delays and cost overruns.

# SED focusing on strengthening existing infrastructure, staff availability in upgraded schools: Sakeena Itoo

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 4:** Minister for Education Sakeena Itoo on Saturday stated that the School Education department (SED) is presently focusing on strengthening the existing infrastructure and ensuring adequate availability of teaching staff in the upgraded schools across Jammu and Kashmir.



The Minister stated this while replying to a question raised by Legislator Rafiq Ahmad Naik in Legislative Assembly today regarding upgradation of schools.

She informed that a feasibility report has been submitted by the Chief Education Officer to the Directorate of School Education, Kashmir for upgradation of High School Jawahirpora Lam to the level of Higher Secondary level.

She mentioned that High School Jawahirpora Lam's nearest Higher Secondary School is Higher Secondary School Satoora, about 6 km away.

The Minister said that the area has some population belonging to tribal communities but the up-gradation of schools is subject to the fulfilment of laid down criteria and feasibility norms like distance, feeding schools and top-class enrolment, which are prerequisites.

She added that at present there is no proposal under consideration for up-gradation of schools to the next higher level, as the department is prioritizing consolidation of infrastructure and provision of teaching faculty in already upgraded schools.

# Land compensation determined as per Land Act 2013: Javed Rana

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 4:** The compensation for proprietary acquired land is determined strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 and the National Highways Authority Act, 1956.

This was stated by Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, while replying to a question raised by MLA Shabir Ahmad Kullay. He was replying on behalf of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah in the House today.

The Minister informed the House that discrepancies have been observed in certain cases between the actual use of land as orchards and the classification



recorded in revenue records in the Kashmir Division. It stated that, as per inputs from the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, such variations generally arise in cases where the land use has been changed over time from agriculture to horticulture by the land owners themselves without following the prescribed procedure under law.

The government further said that revenue records are updated regularly during Rabi and Kharif harvest inspections, in accordance with the Standing Order No. 22 (Jamabandi) and Standing Order No. 23-B.

On the issue of additional compensation or relief, the government reiterated that the matter is governed by the existing legal framework and no separate provision is envisaged.

# Pumping machinery installed at six tube-wells in Hiranagar: Javed Rana

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 4** Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana today informed the House that pumping machinery has been installed at all six tube-well locations in Hiranagar Constituency.

This was stated by the Minister while replying to a question in Legislative Assembly raised by MLA Rajeev Jasrotia on behalf of MLA Vijay Kumar.

It further stated that in villages like Kadyala, Chak Changa, Karol-Matharian, Splawan and Bobiya, the irrigation infrastructure including channels, pump rooms and delivery tanks, have been completed and is currently operational.

However, he acknowledged that in certain locations like Kadyala and Chak Changa, the works related to



distribution networks and allied civil infrastructure could not be executed due to land disputes and other constraints.

The Minister assured the House that the pending works shall be taken

up once the land-related issues are resolved and subject to availability of funds. It will be ensured that the intended benefits of the irrigation scheme are fully extended to the farmers of the area.

# Marh sports infra gets boost: Satish Sharma elaborates upgradation Plans

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

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High School Suriyachak with an allotted cost of Rs. 15.50 Lakh and development of playfield at Sant Hare Ram Dass Public School Phallian Mandal with an estimated cost of Rs. 31.65 Lakh has also been completed.

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# Two drainage projects undertaken to address water-logging in Sopore town: Govt

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 04:** The government has taken up two exclusive drainage projects in Sopore town to improve the drainage network and mitigate water-logging, particularly during heavy rainfall.

This information was given by Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, in reply to a Calling Attention Motion moved by MLA Sopore, Irfan Rasool Kar, regarding water logging in Sopore town following rains.

She was replying on behalf of the Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah.

The Minister stated that Sopore town is predominantly a low-lying area and water accumulation in such locations is natural during heavy showers.

She added that to mitigate the situation, five dewatering pumps



available with the Municipal Council, Sopore, are being deployed for immediate drainage of accumulated water with additional support from the Fire and Emergency Services as and when required.

The Minister further informed that under the UT Capex (Drainage Sector), two projects have been taken up in Sopore town. The Drainage Scheme Sopore (D/S Sopore) is currently under execution at a sanctioned cost of 4.97 crore. Besides, construction of a deep drain at Lane number 06, Bagi Sana, Badam Bagh, Sopore, costing 35 lakh, has been completed, she informed.

She added that these works are aimed at strengthening the drainage infrastructure and mitigating water-logging during heavy rainfall. In addition, the matter has been taken up with

the J&K Urban Environmental Engineering Department on March 25, 2026, for preparation of a comprehensive DPR for the drainage network in Sopore town, she said.

The Minister also stated that the Municipal Council, Sopore, is regularly undertaking the cleaning of drains with available manpower and machinery, wherever required.

She further informed that the PW (R&B) Division Sopore has been approached on March 19, 2026, for preparation of estimates for desilting of existing drains within the urban limits of Sopore town and action will be initiated during the current financial year upon receipt of these estimates.

The Minister added that funds amounting 6.40 lakh have been released by the Directorate of Urban Local Bodies, Kashmir, for the desilting of drains.

## FIRs lodged in PHE equipment theft cases: Javed Rana

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 04:** Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmad Rana, today informed the Legislative Assembly that prompt action has been taken and FIRs have been lodged with the concerned authorities in cases involving theft of transformers and allied Public Health Engineering (PHE) equipment.



The Minister was replying to a Calling Attention Notice moved by Legislator Devyani Rana.

Reiterating the government's commitment, the Minister said that all necessary measures are being taken to safeguard the public assets and prevent such incidents.

The Minister said that the Jal Shakti (PHE) Department is undertaking extensive water supply infrastructure development under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), with 3,253 schemes either under execution or already completed across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. He added that a substantial inventory of pre-existing water supply infrastructure is also operational.

He further stated that given the wide spread and scale of these assets, their safeguarding is being ensured through regular monitoring and deployment of available manpower.

The Minister informed the House that the majority of the schemes are still under execution and remain in the custody of executing agencies until their physical and financial completion, making them responsible for safeguarding the infrastructure during this period.

He also highlighted that the Department is promoting community participation through Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs/Paani Samitis) to foster a sense of ownership at the grassroots level.

## Govt releases Rs 17 lakh for renovation of MMCH Zakoora: Sakeena Itoo

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 04:** The government has released Rs 17 lakh for repair and renovation of Mini Maternity-cum-Child Care Hospital (MMCH), Zakoora to further enhance patient care in the region.

This was stated by Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, while replying to a Calling Attention Notice moved in the House today by Legislator Salman Sagar.

She informed that during 2023-24, Director Health Services, Kashmir authorized the work namely 'upgradation of MMCH Zakura Srinagar' in order to



complete the remaining works including the internal finishing and other allied development works and granted AAA in July 2022 to the tune of Rs. 299.98 lakh. "Subsequently, the funds to the tune of Rs. 75.00 lakh were released but could not be utilized due to non-relocation/occupation of the building by the security forces", she added.

The Minister said that the works on MMCH Zakoora were under execution through J&K Housing Board but remained incomplete due to occupation of the building by the security forces during the year 2019. She further said that during the year 2025, the security forces vacated the building and subsequently the building required repairs and renovation.

She informed that the project "HMESS2526100050-BALANCE WORK AT MMC ZAKURA SRINAGAR" has been approved under the UT Capex Budget 2025-26 with Rs. 17 lakh has been released. The PWD (R&B) was asked to prepare a DPR, which initially estimated costs at Rs. 10 crore, deemed high.

She added that a revised DPR has been requested with due cost effectiveness from PWD and accordingly the repair and renovation of the building shall be taken up at the earliest to make the building operational for hospital purposes.

## Jal Shakti Minister terms public role key to smooth water supply; appeals consumers to clear pending dues

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 04:** Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana, today informed the Legislative Assembly that the temporary one-day disconnection of water supply in parts of Handwara division was undertaken as part of departmental revenue realization drive aimed at improving the recovery and meeting the prescribed targets.

He was replying to a Calling Attention Motion moved by Legislator Sheikh Khurshed in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister stressed that timely payment of user charges is crucial for uninterrupted water supply, emphasizing that it is a shared



responsibility between the public and authorities.

He informed that the disconnection

was resorted to as a last measure after sustained efforts by the department, including door-to-door campaigns and mass awareness drives through local community platforms.

The Minister said that the disconnection affected certain pockets of Magam, Neelipora and other habitations witnessing poor revenue realization.

He added that the water supply was restored on March 30, 2026 and has remained normal and uninterrupted thereafter.

The Minister stated that a significant number of consumers continue to avail potable water supply but have not cleared outstanding dues despite regular billing and repeated reminders.

## District Level Census 2027 Training concludes at Shopian

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SHOPIAN, APRIL 04:** District Level Phase-I training programme for Charge Level Officers for Census 2027 concluded successfully today at the Meeting Hall, Mini Secretariat, Shopian.

The training was attended by ADDC Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone who presided over the concluding event.

The final day of the training focused on equipping charge level functionaries including Tehsildars, CEO Municipal Council, Shopian and other concerned officers with practical

and operational aspects of census implementation.

The training sessions were conducted by Census Officers of Directorate of Census Officers, J&K who provided hands on guidance on digital data collection processes, use of the Census 2027 HLO mobile application, and portal based operations.

Officers were briefed on core census procedures including house listing, numbering, data entry protocols, and enumeration methodologies to ensure accuracy and uniformity in data collection.

Special emphasis was laid on

the creation and finalization of HLBs (House Listing Blocks), handling of enumerator related workflows, and efficient use of the census portal.

The participants actively engaged in the sessions and raised various field level concerns regarding portal functionality, HLB formation, and deployment of enumerators.

The queries were addressed in detail to ensure clarity and preparedness at the ground level.

During the programme, officers were directed to complete all preparatory activities, including

finalization of HLBs and related census frameworks, well before April 15, 2026, to avoid any last minute inconvenience.

The training also reiterated key provisions of census operations, emphasizing its statutory importance under the Census Act, 1948, and its role as a vital tool for evidence based planning and governance.

District Census Handbook was also provided to the trainees for their guidance.

District Statistics & Evaluation Officer Shopian, Bilgeesa Zahoor appreciated the dedicated efforts of Census Officers for delivering

detailed, practical, and result-oriented training sessions. She also acknowledged the active participation of officers and stressed the importance of coordinated field execution.

As a token of appreciation, mementos were presented to trainers by ADDC in recognition of their valuable contribution towards the successful conduct of the training programme.

ACR, Shopian, Shakoor Ahmad Dar, Statistical officers from the offices of DSEO and CPO, Census Clerks and census technical assistants of the district attended the training programme.

## Rana expresses deep grief over the demise of Babu Noor Muhammad Noor

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 4, 2026:** Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, has expressed profound grief and deep sorrow over the passing of Babu Noor Muhammad Noor, a revered figure of the Gujjar-Bakerwal tribe, who passed away today.

In his condolence message, the Minister described late Babu Noor Muhammad Noor as a person of immense wisdom, deep cultural rootedness whose life embodied the rich traditions, values and ethos of the Gojri-speaking community.

He was a great poet and writer, whose works earned him immense popularity among the tribe.

His passing, the Minister said, is not only a personal loss to his family but also a significant loss to all those who cherish and uphold the cultural and social heritage of tribal communities.

The Minister conveyed his heartfelt condolences to noted tribal activist and Secretary Kala Kendra, Dr. Javaid Rahi, and other members of the bereaved family.

He prayed for eternal peace for the departed soul and strength for the grieving family to bear this irreparable loss.

## Govt initiates measures to support farming activities across J&K: Javid Dar

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, APRIL 04:** Minister for Agriculture Production, Javid Ahmad Dar, today informed the House that the government has already taken various measures to support the farming activities across Jammu and Kashmir during the current season.

This was stated by the Minister while responding to the concerns raised by MLA Ghulam Ahmad Mir during the zero hour in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister stated that the government has already asked all the

stakeholder departments to ensure timely provision of fuel to farmers for carrying out their agriculture and horticulture activities. He emphasized that necessary instructions have been conveyed to the concerned authorities so that farmers do not face any inconvenience during the ongoing agricultural operations.

The Minister assured that all possible steps are being taken to facilitate smooth farming activities and ensure adequate supply of fuel required for the agricultural and horticultural purposes.

## MC Bandipora unveils 'Waste to Wonder' Park at Nishat Park

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**BANDIPORA, APRIL 04:** In a significant move toward urban beautification and environmental stewardship, the Municipal Council (MC) Bandipora announced the successful development of a unique "Waste to Wonder" installation at the iconic Nishat Park executed under the Swachhata Excellence Campaign 2026.

The park has been thoughtfully curated using a variety of recycled and repurposed materials, effectively turning "trash into treasure." From intricate sculptures to functional installations, the initiative demonstrates



the immense potential of the Circular Economy and serves as a visual testament to how scientific waste management can enhance the aesthetic appeal of a town. On the occasion, the concerned officials encouraged every resident to adopt responsible waste segregation and recognize that recycling is a powerful tool for building a cleaner

and greener Bandipora.

The "Waste to Wonder" initiative is a core component of the ongoing efforts under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0, focusing on raising awareness about environmental conservation and sustainable living. The transformation of Nishat Park provides a dedicated space for residents and tourists alike to witness the practical application of the 'Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle' (3Rs) philosophy.

The Council urges all residents to actively participate in these sustainability initiatives and contribute toward making Bandipora a leading example of environmental excellence.

## SPECIAL SUMMARY REVISION CAMP FOR PANCHAYAT ELECTORAL ROLL HELD AT DH PORA

DPEO Kulgam presides over camp

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**KULGAM, APRIL 04:** As part of the ongoing Revision of Panchayat Electoral Roll 2026, a Special Summary Revision Camp was organized today at D.H. Pora to facilitate the enrolment of eligible voters and update electoral records.

The programme was presided over by the District Panchayat Election Officer (DPEO) (Deputy Commissioner) Kulgam, Shahzad Alam.

The initiative was aimed at ensuring maximum participation of eligible citizens in the electoral process and facilitating them in updating their details in the Panchayat electoral rolls.

During the camp, several new eligible voters were enrolled on the spot, while citizens were also facilitated in submitting forms for inclusion, deletion, correction and transposition in the Panchayat electoral rolls.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, the DPEO emphasized the importance of maintaining accurate and updated electoral rolls for strengthening grassroots democracy and ensuring transparent Panchayat elections.

He urged citizens, particularly those who have attained have attained the age of 18 years as on 01-04-2026, to verify their details and ensure inclusion of their names in the electoral rolls within the stipulated timeframe.

## Oil markets surge to rising highs post Trump statement that conflict with Iran to continue indefinitely

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**WASHINGTON, APR 4:** Oil markets surged on Thursday as the West Asia war intensified, with energy prices jumping to massive highs after US President Donald Trump signalled that he would continue mounting sustained military pressure against Iran, giving no clarity on reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

Brent crude rose USD 7.87 (7.78 per cent) to settle at USD 109.03 per barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) climbed USD 11.42 (11.41 pc) to USD 111.54 -- its largest single-day gain in absolute terms since 2020.

Despite the spike, both benchmarks remain below the near-USD 120 levels seen earlier in the conflict, reports Bloomberg.

The rally followed Trump's indication that US strikes would intensify in the coming weeks, reinforcing concerns that supply disruption could persist. He provided



no timeline for restoring flows through Hormuz, which typically carries about 20 pc of global oil and liquefied natural gas.

With the route effectively shut after Iranian retaliation to US-Israeli strikes launched on 28 February, market focus has shifted from immediate damage to the risk of prolonged disruption. Traders are increasingly pricing in delays even if infrastructure remains intact.

"The real question... is whether the restart of oil flows is now delayed further," said Dennis Kissler of BOK Financial.

Market structure also highlighted tight supply. WTI traded at an unusual premium of nearly USD 3 above Brent - the highest in a year - while front-month WTI recorded its widest-ever premium over later-dated contracts, signalling acute short-term scarcity.

As per the fluctuating forecasts, Citi sees Brent averaging around USD 95 in a base case and USD 130 in a seemingly optimistic scenario later this year, while JPMorgan estimates prices could reach as high as USD 120-130 in the near term and exceed USD 150 should disruption continue into mid-May.

Dallas Federal Reserve President Lorie Logan said the economic impact could remain manageable if the conflict resolves quickly, but warned uncertainty remains elevated.

On the supply side, US producers have begun to respond, with oil rig counts edging higher, though companies remain cautious about expanding output without sustained price strength.

Diplomacy also remains ongoing, with UK convening a virtual meeting of around 40 countries to discuss reopening Hormuz, though the US is not expected to attend, while OPEC is preparing to consider potential output increases. UNI

## Sonalika Tractors Posts Record FY'26 sales of 1,80,504 Tractors in Its Landmark 30th year!

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**PUNE, APR 4:** Marking a landmark achievement in its 30th year, India's No. 1 tractor export brand Sonalika Tractors has registered an all-time high 1,80,504 tractor sales in FY '26.

The achievement reflects the company's disciplined execution, farmer-first approach, and continued focus on delivering technologically advanced, heavy-duty tractors, a release stated on Friday.

This achievement also reflects the ever-growing trust of farmers and company's readiness and strong synergy to meet the diverse agricultural needs across different regions.

At a time when the global environment is full of challenges, Sonalika has maintained tremendous momentum through focused execution, product innovation and manufacturing excellence at its World's No. 1 tractor plant.

On the back of its exciting launches in FY'26, Sonalika is poised to strengthen its Research and Development (R&D) capabilities to deliver cutting-edge solutions for driving future growth, the release said.

Sharing his thoughts on the achievement,



Raman Mittal, Joint Managing Director, International Tractors Limited, said: "In our defining 30th year, our 'Jeetne Ka Dum' has truly come alive as we achieved a historic milestone of our highest-ever annual sales of 1,80,504 tractors.

What makes this journey even more special is not just the number, but the consistency of the people behind it. From 50,000 tractors to 1 lakh... to 1.5 lakh... and now 1.8 lakh -- we have grown with largely the same team and partners. We have not just scaled, rather we have proudly grown together." UNI

## AP: Rockworth to invest Rs. 70 cr to expand Sri City facility

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**SRI CITY (TIRUPATI DIST, AP), APR 4:** Rockworth Systems Furniture India Pvt Ltd on Friday announced plans to expand its manufacturing facility in Sri City with a proposed investment of Rs. 70 crore.

The expansion includes capacity enhancement of the existing plant and the setting up of a new manufacturing unit, aimed at strengthening the company's long-term growth and reinforcing Sri City's position as a key industrial hub.



Managing Director and CEO Shailesh Kumar Singh said the initiative reflects the company's focus on responsible growth by combining business expansion with social impact.

Highlighting its corporate social responsibility initiatives, the company said the Meena Devi Memorial Foundation, set up in memory of Singh's mother, continues to support education for children from economically weaker sections.

The foundation currently supports around 100 children, including 37 new beneficiaries added this year, with educational assistance of about Rs. 67 lakh earmarked for the academic year 2026-27.

Sri City Managing Director Ravindra Sannareddy welcomed the expansion, stating that the investment would further strengthen the region's industrial ecosystem while setting an example of responsible corporate citizenship.

Rockworth Systems Furniture India Pvt Ltd, established in 2011, manufactures office, educational and laboratory furniture using advanced production techniques and international quality standards.

## Piyush Goyal meets with Chinese counterpart Wang Wentao over trade cooperation

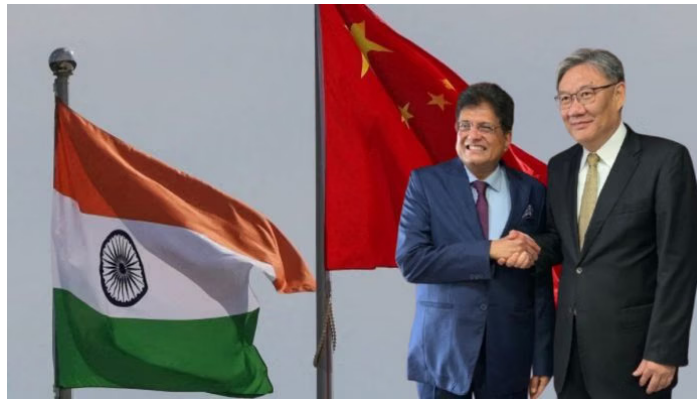
UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 4:** Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal held a meeting with China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao to discuss bilateral economic and trade cooperation.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the World Trade Organisation's 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14).

Sharing the details of the meeting, spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in India in a social media post on X said during the meeting, both the leaders expressed willingness to deepen engagement between the two countries.

"China's Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao met with Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce and



Industry of India, during the 14th WTO ministerial conference. China stands ready to work with India to fully leverage the role of bilateral economic and trade cooperation as a ballast," the post read.

Earlier, sharing his experience

at the WTO meeting, Goyal had highlighted India's engagement with the United States and said India is pushing for preferential access. He also mentioned the best possible deal in its ongoing trade engagement with the United

States, underlining that the country is currently in a very sweet spot among emerging economies.

"Our approach is that India should get preferential access, market access and, having got the best deal compared to any of our competitors or any other emerging or developing economy, we are sitting on a very sweet spot," Goyal said.

He added that as the world's fastest-growing major economy, India offers a compelling India opportunity that global investors are expected to increasingly tap.

Piyush Goyal also held extensive diplomatic outreach, including 12 multilateral and 24 bilateral meetings aimed at strengthening

trade partnerships at the WTO.

While addressing the media after the four-day conference, Minister Goyal said the discussion witnessed intensive deliberations on key global trade issues, including WTO reforms, fisheries subsidies, investment facilitation for development, e-commerce, agriculture, and other developmental concerns.

He informed that three key decisions were announced during the conference, including measures aimed at strengthening the integration of small economies into the multilateral trading system, with a focus on improving trade logistics, connectivity, and border processes to enhance their participation in global trade. UNI

## Global PVC leaders to gather in Mumbai on April 9-10 for landmark industry summit

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**MUMBAI, APR 4:** Mumbai is set to host a major global gathering of the polyvinyl chloride (PVC) industry as the 13th edition of Vinyl India 2026 -- widely regarded as the world's largest PVC summit and exhibition -- will be held on 9-10 April 2026 at Hotel Sahara Star. The two-day event is expected to bring together more than 1,200 delegates representing over 530 organisations from 20 countries, making it one of the most influential platforms for stakeholders across the global PVC value chain. The summit comes at a time when the global PVC industry is grappling with rising uncertainty driven by geopolitical tensions, volatile trade flows, fluctuating prices, and ongoing supply chain disruptions. Against this backdrop, the event aims to provide a platform for industry leaders to exchange insights and explore emerging growth opportunities.

India continues to emerge as a major driver of global PVC demand, supported

by large-scale infrastructure development, irrigation and water supply projects, housing expansion, sanitation initiatives, and industrial growth. The domestic PVC market is currently estimated at around 4.3 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTA), registering a robust annual growth of 6-8 per cent -- significantly higher than the country's GDP growth rate. In value terms, the market is pegged at approximately Rs 35,000 crore and is projected to reach nearly Rs 50,000 crore by 2030, underlining strong long-term demand fundamentals.

Despite rising demand, India's domestic PVC manufacturing capacity remains limited at around 1.5 million metric tonnes, as expansion has lagged due to high capital investment requirements and production complexities. However, the sector is now witnessing renewed momentum with fresh capacity additions underway, reflecting growing investor confidence. Industry projections indicate that by 2030, the market size could reach 6

MMTA, while domestic capacity is expected to increase to 4 MMTA, supported by expansions from major players such as Adani and Reliance Industries Limited. The summit will address key industry challenges through the framework of VUCA -- volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. It will feature global keynote speakers, business sessions, and panel discussions focusing on critical themes, including the future roadmap for PVC, global and Indian economic outlook, demand drivers in agriculture and water infrastructure, geopolitical impacts on trade, price volatility, supply chain resilience, sustainability strategies, next-generation applications, and the role of artificial intelligence in the chemical sector. The event will see participation from a wide spectrum of the PVC ecosystem, including resin producers, pipe and profile manufacturers, converters, additive and chemical companies, machinery manufacturers, technology providers, traders, and other key stakeholders.

## TAFE turns record performance in FY 26 with 2.14 lakh unit sales

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**CHENNAI, APR 4:** Tractors and Farm Equipment Limited (TAFE), one of the world's leading tractor manufacturers and India's second-largest tractor company, today announced a record performance in FY26, with tractor sales approximately 2,14,951 units, the highest ever in the company's history.

TAFE concluded the fiscal year on a particularly strong note, delivering 37.4% growth in March 2026, a substantial achievement against the domestic industry growth of 29% for the month.

The faster than industry growth reflects TAFE's strong product line-up, deep farmer connect, and consistent demand across key agricultural regions, a company statement said. The company achieved its highest-ever domestic sales, both the company's brands Massey Ferguson and Eicher Tractors, recording their highest sales. TAFE's export momentum remained strong, with 12,584 tractors shipped to international markets, underscoring the company's robust global presence and diversified growth strategy.

To meet sustained demand across domestic and export markets, TAFE's manufacturing plants operated at full capacity during the year. The company is actively evaluating capacity expansion initiatives to support future growth and reinforce its leadership position in the global tractor industry. Company Vice Chairman Dr. Lakshmi Venu said "This has been a very positive year for both the tractor market and for farmers across the country. In addition to favourable monsoons, the government's move to reduce GST has provided significant relief to the farming sector.

## Hormuz disruption triggers global trade shock, fuels economic uncertainty: UNCTAD

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 4:** The near-total disruption of maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has sent shockwaves across the global economy, threatening trade flows, pushing up energy prices and heightening financial and geopolitical risks, according to a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The report notes that the Strait, a critical lifeline for global oil and gas supplies, is now "virtually closed," with ship movements witnessing an unprecedented collapse. Average daily transits dropped sharply from 129 vessels in February to just 6 in March, a staggering 95 percent decline effectively bringing one of the world's busiest energy corridors to a near standstill.

This disruption has emerged as a major shock for global trade,

which is now expected to slow in 2026 after showing signs of recovery in recent years.

The uncertainty surrounding supply chains, particularly for energy, is weighing heavily on trade momentum and investor sentiment. Crude oil prices have surged significantly across global benchmarks following the escalation on February 28.

Prices for Brent, WTI, Dubai and Urals crude have risen sharply, in several cases crossing the USD 100 per barrel mark.

The situation has been compounded by supply constraints, including the suspension of crude nominations, dependent on the Strait route. Adding to the pressure, the cost of transporting oil has increased steeply.

Freight indices for tankers have jumped, with the Dirty Tanker Index reaching 215 and the Clean Tanker Index climbing to 188 (base level 100 on February 27), reflecting

tightening shipping capacity and rising logistics costs.

The surge in energy prices is already feeding into inflation. The report highlights that when oil prices rise sharply, the cost of living follows, with global inflation trends showing renewed upward pressure.

This is particularly concerning for developing economies, where higher fuel costs quickly translate into increased food and transportation expenses.

Financial markets have reacted negatively to the unfolding crisis. Stock markets across regions have recorded sharp declines since the escalation began, while currencies in developing economies have weakened against the US dollar.

At the same time, borrowing costs have risen, with sovereign bond yields increasing across developing regions -- adding strain to already fragile fiscal positions.

The report also flags a sharp rise in geopolitical risk, with global

indices indicating heightened uncertainty comparable to previous major crises.

If the disruptions persist, the economic fallout is expected to spread further, affecting growth, trade, and financial stability worldwide, the report warned.

Global growth projections have been revised downward. According to UNCTAD, the world economy is now expected to grow at around 2.6 percent in 2026, with developed economies projected at 1.5 percent and developing economies at 4.1 percent -- both reflecting a slowdown from earlier trends.

The crisis is also intensifying debt vulnerabilities. An estimated 3.4 billion people live in 46 developing countries that already spend more on servicing debt than on health or education, making them particularly exposed to rising borrowing costs and external shocks.

The collateral effect of these

disruptions also affected multiple sectors of India.

In March alone, there has been a depreciation of over 3pc witnessed in the rupee as per the dollar, and stock markets also have a turbulent month due to war escalation in west asia. According to the government data, India imports about 60pc of its LPG consumption and out of it, 90pc come through Strait of Hormuz which has been severely impacted due to current happenings. The government took certain measures such as excise duty reduction on diesel and petrol, securing LPG stocks and increasing the allocation of commercial LPG to ensure the minimal effect on the supply chain from war.

In March, Centre has also constituted a three-member committee of executive directors from IOCL, HPCL and BPCL to review LPG allocations to restaurants, hotels and other commercial users.

## Public Notice

I, Bisma Rafiq Bhat, Daughter of Mohd Rafiq Bhat, resident of HMT, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, hereby inform the general public that my name during my school time was Batool Bhat. At that time, a bank account was opened in my name as Batool Bhat in J&K Bank bearing Account Number 0258040150000803.

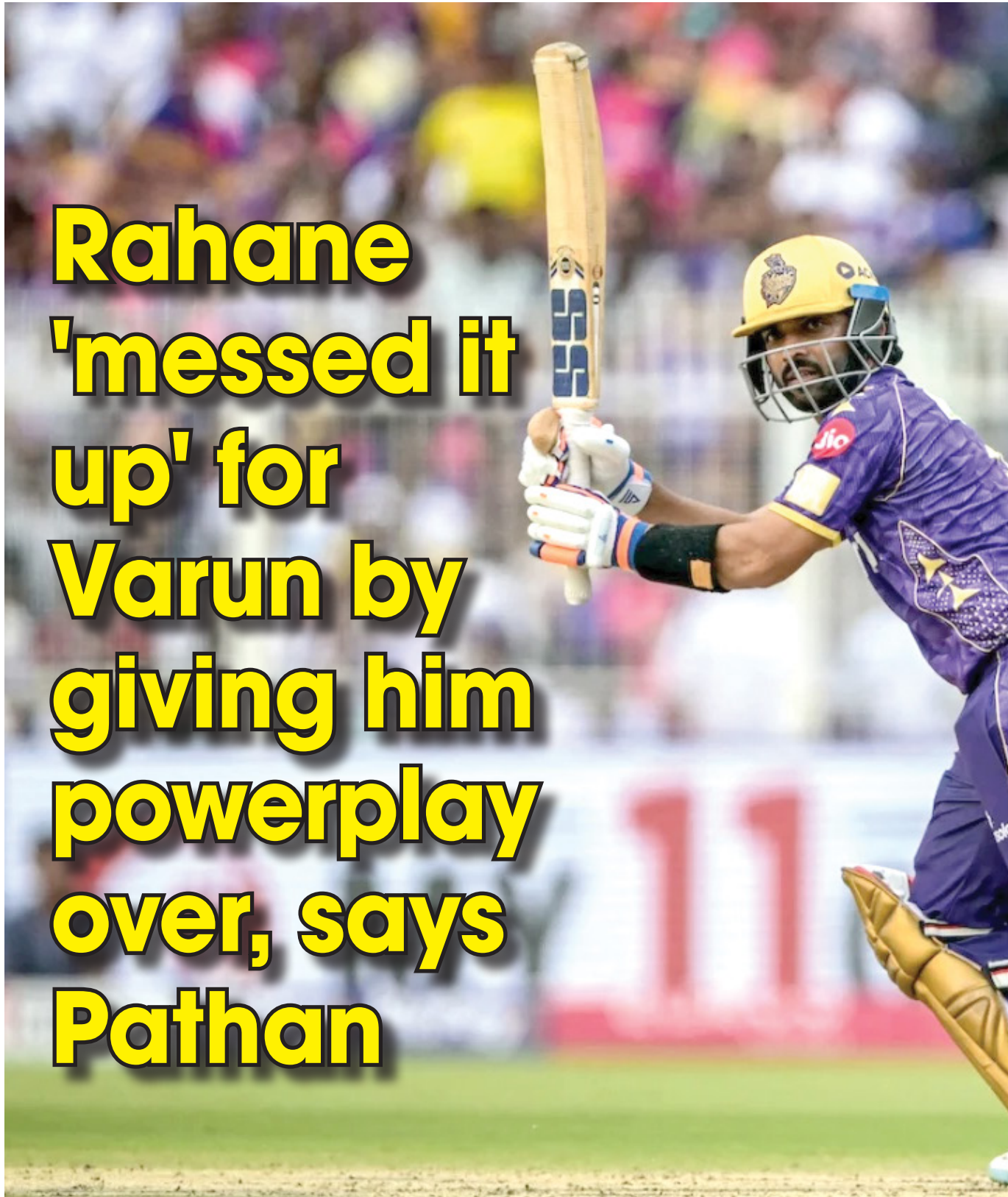
Later, before appearing for my board examinations, I legally changed my name to Bisma Rafiq Bhat, and all my present valid identity proofs are in this name.

I intend to update/correct my name in the above-mentioned bank account from Batool Bhat to Bisma Rafiq Bhat.

If anyone has any objection regarding this name correction, they may contact the concerned branch of J&K Bank within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Otherwise, the bank may proceed with the necessary correction in its records.

**Bisma Rafiq Bhat**  
D/o Mohd Rafiq Bhat  
Resident of HMT, Srinagar  
Account No: 0258040150000803



# Rahane 'messed it up' for Varun by giving him powerplay over, says Pathan

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**KOLKATA:** Varun Chakravarty "doesn't inspire a lot of confidence" at the moment, in Sanjay Bangar's opinion, while Irfan Pathan believes that Ajinkya Rahane "messed it up" when it came to using Varun correctly in Kolkata Knight Riders' (KKR) game against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) on Thursday night at Eden Gardens.

Rahane bowled Varun in the fifth over, and Abhishek Sharma hit him for two sixes and three fours to take out 25 runs. Varun later bowled the 11th over, conceded just six runs, and didn't bowl again in the game. Overall, he had just the one dot ball. But the positive for KKR was left-arm spinner Anukul Roy. He's fresh off a Player-of-the-Series performance with Jharkhand in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, and against SRH, bowled two overs for 16 runs and took one wicket.

"Sometimes, you've got to see the mentality of the bowler, what he is going through," Rahane said at the press conference after the game when asked why Varun bowled only two overs. "It's not compulsory to bowl four overs. If he's struggling, you've got to accept that he is struggling. I wanted Varun to bowl four overs, but the way their batters were going... Anukul bowled two really good overs. "He is playing because he did really well in the Mushtaq Ali [Trophy]; he was the Man of the Series in the Mushtaq Ali [Trophy]. He can bowl in the powerplay, and he can bowl in the middle overs. It is not compulsory [to bowl the full quota] at all. If Sunil [Narine] is struggling [in a game], you might see him bowl two or three overs. Or whoever is struggling. On that particular day, what is happening in the game, you've got to read that situation and decide accordingly."

"Varun is a team man. He is going through that phase where he needs that support from each and every one. Sometimes bowling just two overs can help a player. Or one over. Or no overs. We want Varun's confidence throughout the tournament."

Pathan wasn't having any of it, though, and was particularly critical of Rahane for giving the out-of-form Varun a bowl

in the powerplay. For the record, Varun bowled the fifth over, too, in KKR's first game of IPL 2026, against Mumbai Indians, and conceded 15 runs in that. He finished with none for 48 from his four.

"Captain plays a big role to get your confidence up as a bowler," Pathan said on ESPNcricinfo's TimeOut show. "If he doesn't support you in a moment where you think you can do better and you have got the momentum, this is where the leadership comes in. And this is why he should not have bowled in the powerplay. You are losing on a bowler, you know, who can be your trump card, who can be your match-winner, who has been your match-winner."

"You are giving him the tough job as a captain. So, this is where Ajinkya Rahane did really well in the second half. But [in the] first half, literally [he] messed it up with Varun Chakravarty by bowling him in the powerplay."

At the start of the T20 World Cup earlier this year, Varun was being called "a cheat code" for India in the same vein as Jasprit Bumrah. But in his last six games before the one against SRH, at the World Cup and then against MI, Varun had conceded 273 runs in 23 overs, leaving him with an economy of 11.86, the worst for any bowler across a six-match streak (for a minimum of 20 overs) in men's T20s.

Bangar, however, understood where Rahane was coming from.

I think he [Varun] bowled a good second over because he's gone for, what, 25 runs in the first over, and then after that coming back and bowled a second over really well," Bangar said. "And I just feel that at the moment [Varun] doesn't inspire a lot of confidence, and that's the reason why Ajinkya is not using him. He could have been used [more] but having three spinners [Roy and Narine the others], you can understand what he was trying to do."

"Along with that, I felt that the use of slow balls became very good in terms of how batters were not able to get the ball or get those aerial strikes. Because [Heinrich] Klassen was trying to hit those sixes. Even Nitish Reddy was trying to get under the ball but they just couldn't find the meat of the ball."

## 'Shorter the better' - Zampa prefers length of PSL over IPL

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**LONDON:** Australian legspinner Adam Zampa says overseas players at the IPL "would love for it" to be a shorter competition, and that the length of that tournament was a decisive factor in him opting to play the PSL over the IPL.

Zampa, who has played five seasons at the IPL, said he'd initially planned to take a break in this window, but the PSL's timing and shorter window made it an attractive competition.

"I think the shorter the better [for T20 leagues]," Zampa told ESPNcricinfo during an interview in Lahore. "I won't speak for anyone else, but I'm assuming the guys at the IPL would love for it to not go for two-and-a-half months."

Zampa entered the auction for the PSL for the



first time in his career, and was the most expensive overseas bowler signed, with Karachi Kings snapping him up for PKR 45 million (approx. USD 161,000). He has helped Kings make the perfect start in the tournament, with the side sitting top of the table with three wins in three. That success has come in large part down to Zampa's own contributions, with his economy rate of 5.41 the second best in the league.

While the PSL might have been willing to stump up for Zampa's skillset, he said overseas legspinners were not valued in the same way in India, something that, according to him, happened "only at the IPL", in part due to the domestic depth.

"My skillset [doesn't get] the same value there, and you can understand the auction dynamics at the IPL always leans towards fast bowlers or all-rounders," he said. "They go to domestic spinners more often than not in that competition. I think legspinners being undervalued is specific to the IPL. It's always been the case."

# Rahane Hits Back at Strike-Rate Critics

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**KOLKATA:** It's tough to chase a challenging total without at least one big partnership and that was missing for Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in their first home game of the IPL 2026 season, where they went down by 65 runs in pursuit of Sunrisers Hyderabad's (SRH) 226. Ajinkya Rahane said as much after the game, saying KKR "needed to take it deep", while also defend-

ing his own approach with the bat.

KKR's innings lacked any half-century stand and two of their main batters - Cameron Green and Angkrish Raghuvanshi - getting run-out only compounded their woes as they were skittled for 161 in only 16 overs.

"We needed a couple of big partnerships, guys who were set, they needed to take it deep," the KKR captain said. "In batting, when you are chasing a target you need

that partnership. We couldn't get that. In the second innings, the slower balls were slightly stopping [in the pitch], the slower balls were gripping a lot more than the first innings. We thought the wicket would get better but the ball was stopping."

"But, no excuses. We got a good start. In the first six overs, we were 78 [74] but lost that one extra wicket. Greeny's run out. Apart from that we were going really well. The middle overs

were the crucial time for us and we needed those partnerships from the set batters and that just didn't happen. SRH executed the slower balls and the angles they used were really good."

Rahane himself scored only eight runs in his first nine balls before top-edging a Jaydev Unadkat slower ball. He struggled to find the gaps or put the ball away when facing the spin of Harsh Dubey and Abhishek Sharma in the powerplay, some-

thing SRH used possibly to counter Rahane's strength against seam bowling.

As such, since IPL 2023, only Abhishek (176.56) has a better strike rate than Rahane (167.78) in the powerplay among Indians (with a cut-off of 250 balls faced). The issue for Rahane is that it drops after the field restrictions end. On "certain critics" criticising Rahane about his strike rate, he said he wasn't going to pay heed to them.

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