

North in News

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Record voting in Assembly polls: West Bengal-phase I crosses 92.6 pc turnout, Tamil Nadu over 85 pc

CHENNAI/ KOLKATA, APRIL 23: In a rousing celebration of democracy, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal on Thursday recorded their highest-ever voter turnout since Independence in the Assembly elections. Highest ever percentage of polling in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu since Independence - ECI salutes each voter of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said. As per ECI data at 10:20 pm, Tamil Nadu registered a total



turnout of 85.14%, while West Bengal's Phase-I recorded an even higher 92.6%, both surpassing their previous records set in 2011, when Tamil Nadu had logged 78.29% and West Bengal 84.72%.

Officials, however, clarified that voters who joined queues by the 6 PM deadline were allowed to cast their ballots. The total polling percentage in the 2021 Assembly polls was 82.30 per cent in West Bengal, and 79 per cent in Tamil Nadu. The enthusiasm persisted despite reports of violence, administrative challenges, and controversies, including voter roll issues, especially in West Bengal. The massive turnout highlights a deep engagement of citizens with the democratic process and suggests that

voters viewed these elections as particularly decisive, making the scale of participation both remarkable and significant. Tamil Nadu's 234 constituencies voted in a single phase, while in West Bengal, more than half (152) of the 294 constituencies exercised their franchise, while the remaining will vote on April 29. Happy over the high polling, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "A storm of change is sweeping West Bengal." "I appeal to first-time voters to vote in favour of trust

(Contd on Pg 2)

LG calls for students, teachers' role in nation-building



JAMMU, APR 23: The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Thursday inaugurated the New School Building of Swami Pranavanand Vidyamandir in Panigraam, Nagrota. The School is run by Bharat Sevashram Sangha, a renowned socio-cultural and philanthropic organisation. Bharat Sevashram Sangh started pre-primary to Class 8 education here in 2014 under 'Har Ghar Shiksha'. Over half the stu-

dents are from poor families; they have illuminated countless lives. Addressing a gathering on the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor said that new higher secondary building and skill infrastructure will ensure disadvantaged students get quality education. "Once all the floors of building are complete, it will serve more than 1,500 students transform thousands of lives. With future residential facilities for 100 boys, local economy will get a boost, backward areas will be transformed, and society will advance with new confidence," the

(Contd on Pg 2)

BJP leader Rathore demands apology from Kharge for remarks against PM Modi



SRINAGAR, APR 23: BJP leader Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore on Thursday said AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge's terrorist remark against Narendra Modi was an attack on crores of Indians who elected the prime minister. Addressing a press conference here, Rathore, Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of Rajasthan, said the

Congress president had indulged in "verbal violence" against Prime Minister Modi, and should apologise. "There is physical violence, and then there is verbal violence. Such a senior politician indulging in such behaviour against a constitutional post is electoral frustration, and that too against a constitutional post that has been elected by crores of Indians. You can see where thinking, wisdom and culture have gone," he said. The BJP leader said the people of the country today question whether "grabbing power" is so important that people forget about democratic and cultural values and indulge in such attacks. "This is an attack on crores of Indians who elected Modi as the PM of the country. This must be condemned," Rathore said.

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Trump orders military to shoot and kill' Iranian small boats chocking Strait of Hormuz

WASHINGTON, APR 23: US President Donald Trump has ordered the US military to "shoot and kill" Iranian small boats chocking the Strait of Hormuz. In a social media post Thursday morning, he said the military is intensifying its mine clearing efforts in the critical waterway. The move intensified the US-Iran standoff in the Persian Gulf and raised questions about efforts to end the war. Meanwhile, the US military said it seized another tanker Thursday associated with



smuggling Iranian oil, the Majestic X, in the Indian Ocean, deepening confusion over efforts to end the war. The seizure comes a day after Iran attacked three cargo ships in the Strait of Hormuz, capturing two of them.

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No one will be able to infiltrate Bengal after BJP wins polls: Amit Shah

BALAGARH (WB), APR 23: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said "not a single intruder" would be allowed to enter West Bengal if the BJP comes to power in the state, and the illegal immigrants already here would be "selectively rooted out". Addressing a public rally at Balagarh in Hooghly district on a day when voting for the first phase was underway, he said the BJP was poised to form a government in the state with a first majority. "Today, the voting for the first phase is almost over, and this is my 30th programme across Bengal. On May 5, Didi's game will be up. The BJP will form a government in Bengal with a full majority," he said. The result of the West Bengal Assembly polls will be declared on May 4. Asserting that infiltration was hurting the state's economy and national security, Shah said, "Intruders are eating away the



jobs of Bengal's youth, the rations of the poor, and working to undermine the country's security." Stepping up his attack on the TMC government, the senior BJP leader accused it of fostering 'syndicate raj' and burdening people with what he described as "Bhappo tax", in a jibe at Mamata Banerjee's nephew and the TMC's

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BRIEF NEWS

Four held for providing logistic support to terrorists

SRINAGAR, APR 23: Four over ground workers (OGWs), including a woman, were arrested in Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital here for allegedly providing logistic support to terrorists, officials said on Thursday. Police arrested the four OGWs from the Hazratbal area of the city here on Wednesday night. They identified the OGWs as Zahoor Ahmad Mir, Bashir Ahmad Bhat, and Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, all residents of Hazratbal. The woman was identified as Shazia Mohammad, a resident of Hazratbal as well, the officials said. They said a hand grenade, 15 AK-47 rounds, four mobile phones and some cash were

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JKBOSE notifies dates for re-evaluation, photocopies of answer scripts

JAMMU, APR 23: The Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) has announced opening / closing dates of the online links for re-evaluation and obtaining the photocopies of answer scripts of class 10th and 12th of Annual Regular. The Board has approved some landmark reforms that would deregulate the tourism industry and enhance the overall experience of the tourists visiting Ladakh. The reforms have been undertaken to reduce compliance burden on stakeholders and create a unified, streamlined, and citizen-friendly registration mechanism for tourism units in the Union Territory. The

(Contd on Pg 2)

ATS arrests 2 for alleged terror links & sleeper cell activities Lucknow, Apr 23

LUCKNOW, APR 23: The Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorism Squad has arrested two individuals accused of being involved in a conspiracy to carry out terrorist activities in India with alleged links to Pakistan-based gangsters. According to officials, intelligence inputs indicated that Pakistani gangsters, allegedly acting on the directions of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), were attempting to destabilize India's sovereignty, unity, and internal security. These operatives were reportedly using social media platforms such as Instagram to radicalize Indian youth, recruit them into sleeper cells, and incite them to carry out attacks. During the investigation, authorities found that Pakistani gangsters Shahzad Bhatti and Abid Jatt, along with radical YouTubers, were targeting young Indian men. They allegedly used recruits with financial incentives and encouraged them to

J&K set to spread red carpet for International Film Festival this year

JAMMU, APR 23: In a significant initiative to promote cinema, culture, and tourism, the Government of Jammu & Kashmir has initiated plans to host a prestigious international film festival through the Department of Information & Public Relations (DIPR). The decision was taken during a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, which was attended by the Additional Chief Secretary, Finance; Additional Chief Secretary, Tourism; Commissioner Secretary, Information; Director, Information & Public Relations, and other senior officers. During the meeting, the Chief Secretary directed the Information Department to begin preparations for the maiden film festival in the Union Territory. He emphasized the need for a professionally managed event of national stature, drawing parallels with the International Film Festival of India held in Goa. To ensure seamless execution, it was decided that a dedicated committee will be constituted at the earliest to oversee all arrangements related to the festival. The committee will be responsible for planning, coordination, and overall supervision to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the event. The Chief Secretary further instructed that a competent and experienced agency be identified and engaged for efficient management of the festival. He stressed the importance of exploring best practices by studying similar events organized across the country. Underscoring the importance of adhering to timelines, he directed that the process be initiated promptly, with the issuance of the work

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Omar assures priority redressal of public concerns, reaffirms commitment to inclusive development

JAMMU, APR 23: Several public and trade deputations on Thursday called on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, presenting a wide spectrum of developmental and industry-related matters, while seeking continued policy support and facilitation. A deputation led by President Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Arun Gupta, engaged with the Chief Minister on key issues concerning trade and commerce. The delegation highlighted matters impacting business activity and emphasized the need for a more conducive environment to further boost economic growth and streamline operations. The industry delegation also expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister for restoring the Darbar Move, noting that the session has



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L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena approves landmark tourism reforms in Ladakh to boost tourism and hospitality industry

LEH, APRIL 23: In a major step towards promoting ease of doing business and boosting the tourism sector in Ladakh, Lieutenant Governor, Vinai Kumar Saxena, has approved some landmark reforms that would deregulate the tourism industry and enhance the overall experience of the tourists visiting Ladakh. The reforms have been undertaken to reduce compliance burden on stakeholders and create a unified, streamlined, and citizen-friendly registration mechanism for tourism units in the Union Territory. The initiative follows a series of meetings held by the Lieutenant Governor with tourism stakeholders and delegations representing various tourism associations. It is also aligned with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dictum of "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance." The



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Chief Secy reviews Rs 3440.43 Cr plan for flood restoration works

Calls for strict timelines in execution of projects



JAMMU, APR 23: The Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting to review the comprehensive plan for utilization of funds earmarked for works related to the permanent restoration of damages caused by floods and associated calamities in 2025. The meeting besides the ACS, PDD; ACS, Finance; ACS, PWD; Principal Secretary, DMRR&R was attended by Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD; Commissioner Secretary, S&S; Commissioner Secretary, School Education Department. The Deputy Commissioners also attended the meeting through video conferencing from their respective offices. The Chief Secretary emphasised upon all Departments to accord necessary administrative approval and technical sanction to ensure that works are tendered and completed without any delay. He called for submission of work-wise completion details in due course and stressed that each project must be executed strictly as per the approved list and within the prescribed estimates. He enjoined upon the Departments to expedite approvals so that tendering is completed promptly and execution of works is taken up by June this year. The Chief Secretary stressed the importance of strict adherence to the guidelines issued by the Disaster Management Division,

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for recovery and reconstruction. He observed that the Ministry is going to have its focus on the execution of these works therefore demands highest priority on our part as well. He directed all departments to ensure that project proposals are aligned with the PDNA findings and that there is no duplication of fundings across different schemes, particularly between R&R and SASCI components. The Additional Chief Secretary, Finance, Shaileendra Kumar, underscored the need to fix strict timelines for each stage of implementation to ensure timely completion of all projects. He assured that

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Imams, mosques join 'war on drugs' in Anantnag

SRINAGAR, APR 23: Imams and management committees of various mosques in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir have joined the government's "war on drugs", using their religious platform to create awareness against drug abuse, officials said on Thursday. "In a significant community-driven initiative against the drug menace, mosques across Anantnag have extended full support to the ongoing efforts of the police in combating drug abuse and illegal narcotic cultivation," a police official said. During congregational gatherings and through loudspeaker announcements, imams and mosque committees appealed to

(Contd on Pg 2)

Record...

and drive away fear. I can clearly see that with the pace of voting, fear is losing and trust is winning," he said, addressing an election rally in Mathapur of South 24 Parganas district. However, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, speaking at a campaign rally in Bhowanipore, said, "The turnout is indicative of the fact that people have come out in numbers to vote against the BJP. Foremost among the keenly watched constituencies are Nandigram in East Midnapore district, where Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari is contesting as a BJP nominee. Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is in the fray from Baharampur in Murshidabad district, and former state BJP chief Dilip Ghosh is trying his electoral luck from his old constituency, Kharagpur Sadar in West Midnapore district. There were also a few sporadic reports of clashes and attacks on candidates' vehicles and alleged intimidation. A Congress worker was injured in a clash between workers of his party and those of the Trinamool Congress near a polling station in Murari of Birbhum district, police said. The Central Forces had to resort to a baton charge to disperse the mob. In Murshidabad's Nowda area, vehicles in the convoy of Humayun Kabir, the candidate of the Aam Janta Utkalyan Party, were attacked. The police remained inactive even as the TMC goons rained bricks on my vehicle as well as the vehicles of my polling agent and other supporters," Kabir told reporters. ECI has sought an Action Taken Report on the incident. BJP's Asansol South candidate Agnimitra Pal alleged her car's windshield was shattered when it was hit by a stone as she was leaving a polling station in the Rahmanagar area. That had just taken down in my car, and the engine had started the engine when suddenly we got jolted by the sound of glass shattering," Paul told UNI. Meanwhile, the poll panel said it has received 260 complaints related to alleged electoral malpractices at its office, in addition to 375 complaints submitted through the CVIGIL app. In East Midnapore district's Patsapur, a 58-year-old voter, Nripendra Das, died after reportedly falling ill due to the heat while at a polling booth. The ECI called for an Action Taken Report following allegations that Left Front workers and supporters were allegedly barred from casting their votes in Domkal of Murshidabad district. There were also allegations that Central forces initially remained inactive and that adequate assistance was not provided by the state police. Except for a minor incident, when police arrested four people, including an independent contestant from the Khataspokam seat in Trinamooli district on charges of damaging an ATM, leading to tension and some delay in the polling process, and an incident of a cop being stabbed in a booth, the voting was peaceful across Tami Nadu. Meanwhile, residents of two villages - Perampathi in Nanguneri in Tirunelveli district and Vengaiyavai, an SC hamlet, in Pudukkottai district - boycotted the polls. Both Tami Nadu and West Bengal conducted a Special Intensive Rally, in addition to 375 complaints filed this year to update voter lists. The outcome of these elections is expected to influence the political landscape in two key states and contribute to the broader national discourse in the run-up to the 2029 Lok Sabha elections, amid ongoing debates on issues such as delimitation and women's reservation.

LG calls...

Lieutenant Governor said. In his address, the Lieutenant Governor called upon students and teachers to contribute to nation-building and adapt classrooms to today's changing global landscape, positioning India as the world's leading knowledge economy. "We must strengthen cultural awareness in students, as unity in diversity defines global society. Promote communication skills for clear expression, enabling the new generation to improve lives, uphold democratic values, and foster collaboration for a prosperous J&K," the Lieutenant Governor said. The Lieutenant Governor also called for student-led initiatives in art, craft, music, or entrepreneurship deserves equal respect and opportunity. "Teachers must recognize that education focused solely on marks and narrow academics, sidelining art, sports and skills, is unfit for the future. We must prepare students for irreplaceable human capacities like creativity, critical thinking, moral decision-making, collaboration, and lifelong learning which no machine can replace," he said. The Lieutenant Governor said the world is changing rapidly and unlike the stable careers in the past, professional work forces requires continuous learning, skilling and upskilling. "We are at a threshold where AI and automation is transforming industries, offices, hospitals, and schools and our human resource need to be a step ahead," the Lieutenant Governor said. The Lieutenant Governor also highlighted the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) and emphasised that the policy is a potent tool to meet national needs, boost societal capacity, and accelerate economic growth. "To bridge rural-urban and regional-social gaps, NEP is a powerful tool, societal asset, and reliable partner for meritorious students. India will emerge as a robust knowledge economy, nurturing generations with scientific temper, moral strength, cultural values, skills, and a spirit of service and sacrifice," the Lieutenant Governor observed. He said a student's view of the external world depends on self-perception, shaped by experiences. "True education balances both, equipping students with knowledge and skills for outer world, plus self-awareness and emotional resilience for inner world. This holistic approach is every school's core duty. Every student must blend science and values for progress. NEP measures guarantee Viksit Bharat; for the first time in decades, our talented children, teens, and youth are policy priorities," the Lieutenant Governor said. The initiative of Bharat Sevashram Sangha is supported by Indian Oil, Hindustan Petroleum and other donors. Srimat Swami Bhiswanandaji Maharaj General Secretary, Bharat Sevashram Sangha; Srimat Swami Ambarshandaji Maharaj, Joint Secretary, and senior sanyasins of Bharat Sevashram Sangha; and senior officials were present.

BJP leader...

Welcoming the Supreme Court's questioning of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's actions in the ECI search at the office of political-constituancy firm LBAC, Rathore said it is a victory of truth. He congratulated the Supreme Court for unmasking what was going on behind the scenes in West Bengal. "When even judges are not safe in Bengal, then who can be? So, it definitely is the victory of the truth," he added. To a question about violence in Bengal, Rathore expressed hope that the percentage will increase this time as security forces have been deployed there in strength. "I do not have the first-hand info, but Bengal has been governed by the politics of fear. There was violence even after the last elections. But security forces have been sent there this time to keep the violence low. Voting will also take place in two phases. The Election Commission has directed the Centre to send security forces

there to control the violence, and we hope polling percentage will increase this time," he said. On a question about restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, the BJP leader said, "This is a very important region of the country, but there is a process for everything. "As we move forward with the process, statehood will come," he said. Earlier, Rathore lashed out at the Congress and other opposition parties for creating hurdles in the passage of the Constitutional Amendment Bill in the Parliament. He said women have waited for a long time for a reservation and for being a part of policy and decision-making. "But Congress and a few other opposition parties created hurdles in its implementation." The amendment presented an opportunity for all parties to take credit for passing this unanimously, like the Women's Reservation bill was passed unanimously in 2023, he said. He said Modi did not want to take anything from anyone by implementing the women's reservation in the current strength of the Lok Sabha. "It was better to have expansion and then give representation to women," Rathore said.

Trump...

Ship-tracking data showed the Majestic X in the Indian Ocean between Sri Lanka and Indonesia. The standoff between the US and Iran has effectively choked off nearly all exports through the Strait of Hormuz, where 20 per cent of the world's traded oil passes in peacetime, with no end in sight. Here is the latest: US stocks edge back from their records and oil prices 90-ye

The US stock market is edging back from its all-time high following mixed profit reports from Tesla and other big companies. Oil prices are yo-yoing on continued uncertainty about the war in Ukraine. The S&P 500 slipped 0.3 per cent in the early going Thursday following a big rally that erased all its losses because of the war. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 193 points, and the Nasdaq composite fell 0.4 per cent. Oil prices wavered as uncertainty continues about what will happen with the Strait of Hormuz. Brent crude rose 0.5 per cent to USD 102.43 a barrel. Hezbollah said it attacked Israeli positions in southern Lebanon.

The group said in a statement that it targeted Israeli soldiers in the southern village of Taybeh and downed a drone in Majdal Zone on Thursday. Earlier, the Israeli army said it intercepted an "aerial target" in southern Lebanon. The group reiterated that its attacks, which resumed Tuesday, were in retaliation for Israeli violations of the 10-year ceasefire that took effect Friday. The Israeli army has been launching near-daily strikes on southern Lebanon since the ceasefire.

Hezbollah has also been accusing Hezbollah of breaching the ceasefire. Trump claims leadership rift is confounding Iran "Iran is having a very hard time figuring out who their leader is! They just don't know!", Trump said in a social media post. "The infighting is between the Hardliners," who have been losing BADLY on the battlefield, and the Moderates," who are not very moderate at all (but gaining respect), is CRAZY!" Trump has repeatedly said over the course of the ceasefire that began April 8 that his team is dealing with Iranian officials who want to make a deal, while acknowledging his decision to kill several top leaders has come with some complications. He announced earlier this week that he was extending the truce to give the battered Iranian leadership more time to come with a "unified proposal" on ending the war. Next UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon could be smaller than the current one.

The head of the UN's peacekeeping operations says he expects the possible replacement for its force in southern Lebanon will "probably be smaller" than the current one that's been in place for nearly a half-century. Jean-Pierre Lacroix said the UNHIF operation, which has inhibited a tense zone where militants from Hezbollah and Israeli forces have battled repeatedly, has recently faced pressure from funding cuts. The force's mandate ends at the end of the year. UN officials are facing a June 1 deadline to present a proposal for the force that could replace it. Trump likes a naval blockade. But Iran presents big differences from Venezuela and Cuba.

President Trump has turned to naval blockades to pressure the governments of Venezuela, Cuba and now Iran to meet his demands, but his proposed tactic is confronting a very different reality in the Middle East than in the Caribbean. Unlike Cuba or Venezuela, Iran choked off a crucial trade route for energy shipments, meaning the longer the standoff persists, the more the global economy will suffer. Tehran also poses a greater military threat - beyond those posed by the adversaries in America's own hemisphere - and requires a sustained military presence far from US shores. Iran's leverage over the Strait of Hormuz gives it power during a shaky ceasefire because the widening economic risks - especially higher US gas prices in an election year - could force Trump's Republican administration to end its blockade. Iran's ports and coastline, experts say. "It's really a question now of which country, the US or Iran, has a greater pain tolerance," said Max Boot, a military historian and senior fellow for national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. Three killed inside vehicle in central Gaza Strip.

An Israeli drone strike killed three men inside a car Thursday in central Gaza Strip, health officials said. Those killed were taken to al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah. Two of them were inside the vehicle targeted on Salah al-Din Street near Maghazi camp, while a third was nearby hospital director Rael Hussein told. The Associated Press. Three others were injured. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A fragile Israel-Hamas ceasefire has held since October, but renewed strikes have killed 791 people and wounded 2,235, according to the latest figures released by Gaza's health ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants in its toll.

No one...

"Bengalis have to pay 'Bhaipao' tax to the TMC's syndicate. Even to purchase a piece of land, people are forced to pay 'bye-bye' to the Mamata government, and we will straighten up the syndicate operators," he said. Shah also flagged the alleged decline of Balagari's traditional boat-making industry, claiming that it had suffered under the present dispensation. "Balagari's boat industry once provided employment to the entire region. But due to Mamata's syndicate raj, it has shut down. Around 41 factories have been closed. I assure you

that once the BJP forms the government, we will restart these units," he said. Invoking Bengal's legacy, Shah paid tribute to educationist Ashutosh Mukherjee and Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the founder of the Bharatiya Janta Sangh, the BJP's ideological predecessor. "This is the land of Ashutosh Mukherjee, who had earned the moniker 'Tiger of Bengal'. His son, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, founded our party and sacrificed his life for the nation. I pay my respects to both leaders," he said. In a sharp political pitch ahead of the next phase of polling, Shah urged voters to back the BJP, framing the contest as one linked to identity and security. "In the elections on April 29, you have to press the button beside the logo symbol on EVMs. You are not pressing it just to make someone an MLA or to form a government. You are pressing it to free Bengal from infiltrators," the former BJP chief said. He also accused Banerjee of promoting dynastic politics, alleging that she wanted to make her nephew chief minister. "The time of Mamata Banerjee is over. The next chief minister will be a son of Bengal's soil, educated in Bengali medium, who will be a Bengali, and most importantly, a BJP worker," he said. "Earlier, Mamata Banerjee's goons used to say that you can channel the political capital as you want, but they would not let anyone cast their vote. I want to tell Didid's goons that if you touch any voter, you will find yourself in the Bay of Bengal," he said.

ATS arrests...

Officials identified sensitive locations and plan attacks, including targeted killings using advanced weapons. Acting on this intelligence, the ATS arrested Tushar Chauthan alias Hizbullah Ah Khan, a resident of Meerut, and Sayyid Farooq Dabhi, a resident of Delhi. Officials recovered a pistol with five live cartridges and a knife from their possession. During preliminary interrogation, Tushar reportedly admitted that he was influenced through social media by a group of individuals, including extremist elements. He claimed to have been in contact with Shahzad Bhatti via Instagram and later through voice and video calls. Investigators say he was instructed to carry out grenade attacks on specific targets and was promised Rs 50,000 in advance and Rs 2.5 lakh after completing the task. He was also allegedly assured assistance in travelling to Pakistan via Dubai. Authorities further stated that Tushar was told that ISI would provide him with a passport, a visa, and a flight ticket. Major Anwar and Major Anwar would assign targets and provide weapons and funds. Some of these materials, including the weapon recovered, are believed to have been supplied through these channels. Officials revealed that both accused had been in contact with Shahzad Bhatti through encrypted communication channels. He was allegedly tasked with writing a TH ('Ehrk-ke-Taliban Hindustan') on walls and recruiting other individuals. Officials revealed that both accused had conducted reconnaissance of targets and were preparing to execute attacks as directed. They had also issued threats to certain individuals, sometimes during conference calls involving Pakistani handlers. Based on the evidence collected, including data from their mobile phones, the ATS has registered a case under multiple sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023, the Arms Act 1959, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) 1967. The cases have been presented before a competent court, and further legal proceedings are underway. The ATS has stated that it will seek police custody remain to gather more information about their associates and the larger network involved.

J&K set...

order to the selected agency targeted before the end of May. The Commissioner Secretary, Information, while addressing a meeting of the J&K media, informed that the National Film Development Corporation of India has indicated reasonable financial requirements for organizing the event. She added that the Department has already undertaken the necessary preparations and is well-prepared to ensure its success. The proposed festival is envisaged to be held after the conclusion of the annual Amarnath Yatra, with final dates to be decided by the concerned department. The festival is well-timed as it coincides with the development and tourism promotion, it was also decided that the festival will not be confined to Srinagar alone. Film screenings and related events will be organized across multiple scenic locations, including Bhamburda, Pattan, Gulmarg, Gaitoran, and Jammu, thereby boosting both emerging and established tourist destinations. This initiative marks a major step towards positioning Jammu as a vibrant hub for film tourism and cultural engagement at the national level.

Omar assures...

significantly invigorated economic activity in the region, particularly in markets, retail properties, hotels and the transport sector. Another deputiation, the Pir Panjal Welfare and Development Trust, led by Vivek Verma, called on the Chief Minister, the deputiation from four aspects of developmental priorities, reflecting the aspirations of the region's residents. The members underscored the immense tourism potential of Pir Panjal region and called for focused efforts to harness it sustainably. They also highlighted the importance of strengthening health and education infrastructure, ensuring reliable drinking water supply, and expanding employment opportunities, particularly for youth in border areas. Issues pertaining to the construction of community and individual bunkers, as well as further strengthening of the administrative framework in these areas, were also brought to the fore. The Chief Minister gave a patient and attentive hearing to all the deputations and individuals. He assured them that their genuine concerns would be addressed on priority, reaffirming the government's commitment to inclusive development and responsive governance across all regions.

L-G Vinal...

new framework provides for a unified registration system for all tourism units, rationalises and significantly reduces documentary requirements, eliminates redundant classifications, simplifies procedures for registration, renewal and transfer, promotes digital and time-bound approvals, enhances transparency and accountability, aligns with national deregulation initiatives, encourages local entrepreneurship, and strengthens the overall tourism ecosystem in Ladakh through ease of compliance. "It is a transformative step for the tourism sector in Ladakh by making the processes simpler, transparent, and people-friendly. Reducing compliance burden and ensuring ease of doing business would empower local stakeholders and significantly enhance Ladakh's standing as a premier tourist destination. I am confident that these reforms would help position Ladakh among the top tourism destinations not only in India but globally," Lieutenant Governor, Sri VK Saxena, said. To begin with, the registration validity of tour operators has been increased from one year to five years, thereby eliminating the need for annual renewals. Government of Ladakh. Similarly, tour and travel operators engaged in adventure and mountaineering activities were earlier required to register separately as "Adventure, Tour Operator" and "Mountaineering Operator" at an additional registration fee of Rs 3000 each. This requirement, too, has been done

away with. A unified category under the nomenclature "Travel Agent" has been introduced, which will authorise the registered entity to undertake all activities permitted under the Registration of Tourist Act. The number of documents required for registration of tour operators has been reduced significantly from 7 documents to 4 documents. Under the new framework, the requirement of a character certificate, a fixed bank balance and educational qualification for running a tour and travel agency has also been removed, thereby making the registration process easier. Likewise, the earlier framework for registration of hotels classified the accommodation units into Category I and Category II (Standard, Deluxe, Luxury), accompanied by detailed and often cumbersome documentation requirements. But with the new regulations, this classification has been discontinued. The documents required for registration of hotels have been reduced to just 02 documents for obtaining a provisional licence with a validity of 18 months and 07 documents for getting a permanent licence that will be valid for 05 years. In the case of homestay registration, the existing process involves multiple procedural requirements and documentation, which often acts as barriers for local participation. The new framework reduces the number of required documents, making the process simpler and more accessible and thereby encouraging community-based tourism and creating livelihood multiple funding streams to address both immediate relief and long-term resilience. Highlighting the need for capacity building, the Principal Secretary further revealed that the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) has initiated a series of training programmes for officers and officials of line departments and districts. These programmes aim to strengthen institutional capacity for effective project formulation, implementation, and monitoring. The Principal Secretary apprised that the largest share of ₹ 1579.09 Cr has been approved under the Recovery & Reconstruction (R&R) component of the UT Disaster Response Fund (UTDRF) as Central Financial Assistance included in the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA). This includes ₹ 1421.118 Cr as Central share and ₹ 157.909 Cr as UT share.

Chief Secy...

the UT share would be made available without any hindrance to facilitate smooth execution of these works. He advised the departments that necessary department-wise allocations would be made on BEA's platform to facilitate timely uploading of works taken up under these additional components, over and above the budgetary allocations. He further stressed that this would help in ensuring their early execution and monitoring. During the meeting, a detailed presentation was made by Principal Secretary, DMRR&R, Chandrakant Bharti outlining the component-wise allocation of ₹ 3440.43 Cr, structured across multiple funding streams to address both immediate relief and long-term resilience. Highlighting the need for capacity building, the Principal Secretary further revealed that the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) has initiated a series of training programmes for officers and officials of line departments and districts. These programmes aim to strengthen institutional capacity for effective project formulation, implementation, and monitoring.

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It was emphasized that this funding window would be utilized judiciously for priority sectors requiring additional financial backing, while ensuring no overlap with R&R allocations. The component consists funding for raising critical infrastructure in R&B Sector worth ₹ 860 Cr, Jal Shakti ₹ 315 Cr, PDD (P73 Cr), Agriculture, Production Department (251Cr) and Youth Services & Sports Department (32 Cr). The CAPEX Budget 2025-26 was also highlighted as an important component of the overall outlay, with dedicated provisions for flood mitigation and restoration in three instalments. These include strengthening of flood control infrastructure, construction of protective works such as embankments and drainage systems, and integration of disaster resilience into capital development planning. The Chief Secretary underscored the urgency of expediting restoration works, particularly in critical sectors, to ensure timely recovery and enhanced resilience against future disasters. He called for close inter-departmental coordination, robust monitoring mechanisms, and outcome-oriented implementation of all projects under the ₹ 3440.43 Cr plan.

Imams...

the public to actively participate in the "war against drugs" and refrain from engaging in or supporting any form of illegal crop cultivation, particularly narcotic substances such as cannabis and opium poppy, he said. The announcements emphasised the social, moral, and legal consequences of drug abuse and illicit cultivation, and highlighted the importance of collective responsibility, urging families and community members to report such activities to the authorities, he said. The police appreciated the "proactive and responsible role" played by religious institutions, temples, and a strong example of public-private partnership, the official said. "Such coordinated efforts are expected to significantly contribute to the success of anti-drug campaigns and the eradication of illegal cultivation in the region," he said.

Four...

recovered from their possession. A case has been filed against them under various sections of the UAPA and Arms Act, the officials added.

JKBOSE...

For obtaining photocopies of answer scripts is on 6th of May, 2026 and for filing Re-evaluation forms is on 10th of May, 2026. The concerned candidates have been intimated to adhere to the timelines. The notification is available on the official website of JKBOSE and candidates are advised to go through contents before availing the service.



Zero Tolerance towards Narco Crime- SP Headquarters Briefs the Media on Arrests of hardcore criminals under Nasha Mukta Abhiyan

Jammu, April 23: In a major crackdown against organized crime and drug trafficking, Jammu Police in Bishnah successfully apprehended three hardcore criminals in two separate cases. SP Headquarters took a press briefing regarding both cases which deal a significant blow to criminal networks operating in the region. In a successful operation, the accused namely Amit Kumar S/o Swaran Lal R/o Sehora, having 6 FIRs against him for Attempt to Murder and Abduction in Bishnah was arrested. Police recovered 254 grams of heroin (chit-



ta), 13 live cartridges, and one Beretta pistol (USA-made) from his possession. A Baleno car bearing registration number JK2IG-3867 was also seized in the case. In

another case two accused persons, namely Lovely Singh and Swaran Singh, both residents of R.S. Pura, were arrested. During the operation, police seized one Thor

vehicle bearing registration number JK02J-9906, 16 gm Heroin (Chitta) along with 06 mobile phones and ₹25,000 cash. The accused are also involved in serious offences including abduc-

tion and attempt to murder, and further investigation is underway to unearth their wider criminal links. All accused have been booked under relevant sections of law, and further investigation is in progress to dismantle the entire network. While briefing the media, SP Headquarters Jammu reiterated the firm commitment of Jammu Police towards zero tolerance against crime and drug menace. It was emphasized that the entire supply chain and criminal networks will be identified and destroyed, and no individual involved will be spared.

Drug Peddler Apprehended with Heroin at Rotary Chowk Prade in SP North zone Jammu

Jammu, 23.04.2026

Continuing the drive against the drug menace, IC PP Parade along with SHO PS Pacca Danga apprehended a Motorcycle bearing registration No. JK02CT-9813 and recovered a heroin-like substance from an unknown driver during naka checking at Rotary Chowk. The driver tried to flee from the spot but was apprehended tactfully after strenuous efforts. On questioning, the person disclosed his identity as Irfan Bhatti, S/o Aslam Bhatti, R/o Usthal Mohalla. Upon personal search, a heroin-like substance weighing approx. 4-5 grams was found in his



illegal possession. During questioning, he failed to provide any satisfactory explanation. In this regard, FIR No. 37/2026 U/S 8/21/22/25 NDPS Act has

been registered at PS Pacca Danga and the investigation has been going on further probe the forward and backward linkages of the recovery.

Pawan Sharma Welcomes Modi Government Decision to Entrust Atholi-Machail Road to BRO

Jammu, April 23: Pawan Sharma, State Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Jammu & Kashmir, has warmly welcomed the decision of the Government of India, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to entrust the construction and maintenance of the Atholi-Machail road in district Kishtwar to the Border Roads Organization. Describing the decision as timely and highly significant, Sharma said it comes in the aftermath of the recent floods in the Chashoti area of Atholi teshil, which caused extensive damage to the road infrastructure and exposed the urgent need for a strong, reliable and weather road network in this remote Himalayan region. Sharma stated that the Atholi-Machail road holds



immense religious and strategic importance, especially for thousands of devotees who undertake the annual pilgrimage to the sacred Machail Mata Temple during the Machail Mata Yatra. Every year, devotees from across Jammu & Kashmir and other parts of the country travel to seek the blessings of the revered goddess. At present, the road connectivity from Kishtwar to Atholi and Gulabgarh is approximately 65 kilometres, after which pilgrims traditional-

ly have to traverse difficult mountainous terrain and undertake a trek of nearly 30 kilometres to reach Machail. Due to harsh weather conditions, landslides, and flash floods, the route frequently remains vulnerable, causing significant inconvenience and safety concerns for both pilgrims and local residents. Sharma noted that by assigning this project to the Border Roads Organization, the Government of India has ensured that the road will be constructed and maintained according to high engineering standards suited to mountainous terrain. BRO's vast experience in building and maintaining roads in challenging and high-altitude regions will significantly enhance the safety, durability, and year-round accessibility of this vital route.

Regional Ayurveda Research Institute Jammu Convenes Institutional Ethical Committee Meeting to Bolster Research Integrity

JAMMU, APRIL 23: The Regional Ayurveda Research Institute (RARI) Jammu successfully held its Institutional Ethical Committee (IEC) meeting today, reinforcing its commitment to ethical standards in Ayurvedic clinical research and trials. Chaired by Dr. V.D.S. Jamwal, Former Director ISM, Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir, the meeting brought together esteemed members, including senior Ayurvedic clinicians, researchers, ethicists, legal experts, and patient representatives. Key discussions focused on reviewing ongoing protocols for studies in anemia management, malnutrition, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, and integrative Ayurvedic therapies. The committee scrutinized 10 research proposals and approved all after rigorous ethical evaluations. The following research projects are approved: i. Assessment of Health - Care Seeking Behaviour of the Population and Perception of Key Health System Stakeholders with special focus on Ayush system of medicine across India - A community-based cross-sectional study. ii. Impact assessment of Ayurveda-based lifestyle advocacy and household utilization of



Medicinal plants through the kitchen garden in primary health care. iii. Association between Viruddha Ahara Practice and Psoriasis- A Case Control Study. iv. Association between Viruddha Ahara Practice and Rheumatoid Arthritis - A Case Control Study. v. Efficacy of Ayurveda Nutritional Supplement (Ayush BL) as an adjuvant to Punarnavadi Mandoorin the management of Moderate Iron Deficiency Anaemia in adolescent Girls- A Community-based Cluster Randomized trial. vi. Effectiveness of an Ayurveda Regimen as an adjuvant to the ICDS diet in the management of Moderate Acute Malnutrition among children aged 3-5 years: A

community-based, prospective cluster-randomized controlled Clinical Trial. vii. Assessment of Health-Care Seeking Behaviour of the Population and Perception of Key Health System Stakeholders with special focus on the Ayush system of medicine across India - A community-based cross-sectional study. viii. Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices (KAP) related to maternal and child health and nutrition, among Anganwadi workers in the selected states in India - ix. Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice on Maternal and Child Nutrition among Health Seekers attending Ayurveda Clinical Research facilities across Different States in India x. A

Cross-sectional Survey to Study the Distribution Pattern of Different Prakriti Types across India - A Multicentric Study. Emphasis was placed on patient safety, informed consent processes, data confidentiality, and alignment with national guidelines from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS). Special attention was given to pharmacovigilance in herbal formulations and equitable participant inclusion, reflecting RARI's role in bridging traditional Ayurveda with modern evidence-based practices. Dr Harbans Singh, Head of the Institute, stated, "Ethical oversight is the cornerstone of credible research. Today's deliberations ensure our work upholds the highest standards, benefiting public health in Jammu and Kashmir and beyond." The meeting also addressed upcoming training programs for researchers on Good Clinical Practice (GCP) norms. This quarterly IEC session underscores RARI Jammu's proactive stance in fostering responsible innovation amid rising demands for Ayurvedic solutions to chronic ailments.

GBHSS Sarwal Creates History with Four Merit List Positions

Jammu, Apr 23: Government Boys Higher Secondary School (GBHSS) Sarwal proudly announces a historic achievement in the recently declared Class 12 results. For the first time in the school's history, our students have secured four positions in the official merit list, marking an extraordinary milestone of academic excellence. In the Humanities stream, Amit Sharma achieved the 4th position, while Keshav Suri secured the 6th position. In the Commerce stream, Rohan Gouria earned the 6th position, and Dhruv Salgotra attained the 9th position. Principal Ms. Anshu Thakur expressed heartfelt gratitude and appreciation



for the relentless dedication of the teaching staff and the hard work of the students. She emphasized that this success reflects the collective spirit of perseverance, discipline, and commitment to excellence that GBHSS Sarwal stands for. To honor this historic accomplishment, the school premises came alive with celebrations. Students

and teachers danced joyfully to the beating of drums, while the Principal, along with staff members, distributed sweets to all present, making the occasion truly memorable. This achievement not only highlights the brilliance of our students but also reinforces GBHSS Sarwal's legacy of nurturing talent and fostering academic distinction.

Central University of Jammu Students and Scholars Excel at National Conference, Win Multiple Awards

Jammu, 23 April 2026: The Centre for Molecular Biology, Central University of Jammu, Students and Research Scholars have brought laurels to the institution by securing prestigious awards at the National Conference held at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), Jammu. M.Sc Biotechnology student Ms. Ritika Sharma and Research Scholar Ms. Tania was awarded the Best Poster Presentation Award, while Research Scholars Ms. Shreya Mangotra and Ms. Preeti Rani received the Best Paper Award, reflecting the strong research culture and academic excellence nurtured at the University. The three-day conference, held from April 15-17, 2026, was themed "Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems and Modern



Science for Viksit Bharat." The event brought together scientists, academicians, and scholars from across the country to deliberate on the integration of India's traditional knowledge systems with modern scientific approaches for sustainable and inclusive national development.

The award-winning research presentations focused on the application of multidisciplinary approaches that combine indigenous knowledge frameworks with advanced scientific tools to address contemporary challenges in health and life sciences. The work was widely appreciated by the conference jury for its novelty, scientific rigor, and potential societal impact, aligning with the broader vision of Viksit Bharat. These recognitions highlight the students' and scholars' academic excellence, innovative thinking, and research capabilities. They also underscore the robust academic environment and rigorous research training imparted by the Centre for Molecular Biology, which continues to promote interdisciplinary learning and cutting-

edge research. Congratulating the awardees, Director of the Centre for Molecular Biology, Dr. Narendra K. Bairwa, Dean of the School of Life Sciences, Prof. Sunil Dhar, and faculty members commended their dedication, perseverance, and commitment to scientific inquiry. They expressed confidence that such achievements will inspire high-quality students to pursue high-quality research and contribute meaningfully to the scientific community. Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Prof. Sanjeev Jain, also lauded the accomplishment, stating that such awards reflect the University's commitment to excellence in research and innovation. He extended his best wishes to the awardees for their continued success in future academic and research endeavors.

MLA Arvind proposes Rs 2 Cr development works in Ranjeetpur Panchayat under "Viksit Village" Initiative

Jammu, April 23, 2026: In a significant step towards strengthening rural infrastructure and accelerating grassroots development, MLA Jammu West Assembly Constituency, Arvind Gupta, today visited Ranjeetpur Panchayat and proposed a series of development works under the "Viksit Village" initiative. The proposed projects, with an estimated cost of approximately Rs 2 crore, include the construction of a community hall, chopal, development and upgradation of schools, drainage systems, street works, and several other essential infrastructure improvements aimed at the overall development of the panchayat. During his



visit, Arvind Gupta personally inspected the sites of the proposed works and held detailed discussions with local residents and officials. He emphasized the need to prioritize projects based on the genuine requirements and aspirations of the people, ensuring that development

reaches every household. Addressing the gathering, Arvind Gupta stated that the development of villages remains a top priority and the "Viksit Village" initiative is aimed at ensuring that no area is left behind in terms of basic infrastructure and civic amenities.

Youth Congress holds massive protest outside BJP MLA's residence in Jammu

"Below the Belt & Crude remarks by BJP MLA against Congress leaders expose BJP's mindset," Sawhney

Jammu, Apr 23: The Youth Congress on Thursday staged a massive protest outside the residence of BJP MLA Vikram Randhawa in Jammu, strongly condemning his crude and derogatory remarks against senior Congress leaders and Sonia Gandhi. The baseless remarks were given by the BJP MLA against Congress using lowly language after Congress party's protest demonstration against the BJP's alleged attempt to disguise the delimitation bill as a women's reservation measure. The protest was led by JKPC General Secretary Anirudh Sawhney and



NSUI President Ajay Lakhotra. A large number of Youth Congress workers gathered at the site, raising slogans against the BJP and holding placards denouncing the remarks. Heavy police deployment

was put in place to maintain law and order and prevent any escalation during the protest. The protest was joined by State Vice President Adv. Ranjodh Singh, General Secretary Sahil Singh Langth,

Secretary Dr. Subaib Manhas, Anmol Kohli and Akhil Bagotra, Jt. Secretaries Amir Malik and Showkat Ali, Tanveer Singh, Moulik Sharma, Tanveer Singh AYC President Mehul Abrol, NSUI Leaders Sandeep Singh balwal, Adnan, Jagdeep, kuldip, Rajan and others. JKPC Youth Congress General Secretary Anirudh Sawhney, strongly criticized the remarks, stating that such language reflects the deteriorating standards of political discourse within the BJP. He said that targeting a leader of Sonia Gandhi's stature with such crude statements is deeply condemnable.

NSS Unit of GDC Samba conducts donation drive & awareness campaign

Samba, 23 April, 2026 - As part of the nationwide Poshan Pakhwada 2026 celebrations, the NSS Unit of Government Degree College (GDC) Samba organised a significant outreach program at the Anganwadi Centre in Diani, Samba. The event combined a philanthropic donation drive with an intensive awareness session on the multifaceted components of the 8th edition of Poshan Pakhwada 2026, an initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

The initiative aimed to bridge the gap between academic institutions and grassroots nutritional centres while reinforcing the spirit of Jan Andolan (People's Movement) for a malnutrition-free India.

The entire series of events for the 8th edition of Poshan Pakhwada (9-23 April 2026) was held under the guidance of the worthy College Principal, Prof. (Dr) Nirlake Kour. The Worthy Principal of the college expressed a highly affirmative and supportive stance regarding this initiative. She emphasised that



Mission Poshan is not just a government scheme but a vital social movement. She also highlighted that by focusing on nutrition during these formative years, youth are helping build a stronger, more intelligent foundation for the nation. The Principal further encouraged the NSS unit to take this message beyond the college walls and into the heart of the community. The Principal noted that such outreach activities foster empathy and social responsibility among students while delivering vital health information to underserved areas. NSS Volunteers conducted interactive sessions with

mothers and caregivers, focusing on the core theme: "Maximising Brain Development in the First Six Years of Life". Key Components of Poshan Pakhwada were Discussed. The volunteers sensitised the community on the five strategic focus areas of Poshan Pakhwada 2026: Maternal & Child Nutrition: Emphasis on optimal nutrition during pregnancy, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and age-appropriate complementary feeding. Early Stimulation (0-5 Years): Educating parents on responsive caregiving and early learning interactions is crucial for cognitive mapping.

Play-Based Education (3-6 Years): Highlighting the importance of holistic development and school readiness through play. Minimising Screen Time: Encouraging families to reduce young children's exposure to digital devices to promote healthy habits and physical activity. Strengthening Anganwadi Centres: Promoting community participation (Jan Bhagidari) to enhance local infrastructure and service delivery. NSS Programme Officer Prof. Babita Kumari organised different activities to cover key components of Poshan Pakhwada 2026. Activities like an Awareness lecture on Diet and care during pregnancy; hazards of Junk and packaged food at GHS Balore, Samba; a DIY toy-making session for kids; an awareness rally on the role of a balanced diet, along with micronutrients and community roles, in holistic brain development; and awareness on minimising screen exposure in children. NSS volunteers also distributed essential items.

Indian Army conducted cleanliness drive at Dessa



Doda, Apr 23: Indian Army conducted a cleanliness drive in the Dessa region today as part of its civic action program and in support of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Army troops alongwith local residents, youth and school students participated in the drive which covered Dessa main market, Govt High School premises, local water bod-

ies and approach roads. Activities included collection and disposal of plastic, water cleaning of choked drains, tree plantation and an awareness session on hygiene, sanitation and waste segregation. The Indian Army Officer, stated that the Army is an integral part of the community and remains committed to the welfare of the awaan,

adding that "a clean Dessa is a healthy Dessa". Local sarpanches and residents appreciated the initiative and pledged to continue maintaining cleanliness and discourage single-use plastic.

The Indian Army reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening Army-citizen outreach efforts.

Corruption in Hydroelectric Power Projects and Environmental Damage Due to Power Projects Companies: Ajeet Bhagat

KISHTWAR// April 23, National Conference senior leader and Chenab Valley Region spokesperson Ajeet Bhagat said that corruption in Jammu and Kashmir's hydroelectric power projects has reached alarming levels. Various power project companies operating in Kishtwar district are allegedly exploiting natural resources and causing severe damage to the local environment.

Bhagat said that despite the presence of several major hydroelectric power projects in Kishtwar district, the local population is suffering from poor infrastructure, unemployment and environmental degradation.

The National Conference leader requested Deputy Commissioner/District Development Commissioner Kishtwar Pankaj Kumar Sharma and Senior



Superintendent of Police Kishtwar Nareesh Singh to conduct a fair, independent and transparent inquiry into these matters so that corruption can be stopped, environmental damage can be prevented and genuine rights and privileges of the local people can be ensured.

"Yagya is most blissful act in universe": Swami Ram Swarup, Yogacharya

Kathua: On the occasion of the ongoing 78-day Yajna Anushthan of all four Vedas, Swami Ram Swarup, Yogacharya, Ved Mandir, Yoi, drew the attention of devotees to Yajurveda Mantra 1/1 and explained that in the entire universe, the one supreme act that benefits all is Yajna alone.

Speaking on the significance of Yajna, Swami ji said that Mam Bhagwan in the Manusmriti states "Akhliah Dharmamoolam" — meaning the entire body of the four Vedas is the root of Dharma. He further cited Vaisheshik Shastra Sutra 1/1/2, where the sage, expressing faith in the Vedas, explains that Dharma is that action by



which we achieve both worldly welfare, i.e. material progress, and also attain moksha (liberation). "Success in all deeds is attained only through Yajna," he said. Quoting Rigveda Mantra 9/113/6, he explained that the knower of the four Vedas, the Brahna, expounds the Vedic word in the Yajna (Chhandasyam Vaacham) and thereby grants seekers the bliss of libera-

tion through knowledge, action, and worship covering both material and spiritual advancement. This is what Yajna is. The teaching of the Atharvaveda is also the same: at the time of creation, Yajna emerged from Parameshwar, and from Yajna emerged Parameshwar. In Yajurveda Mantra 1/2, God instructs the learned human being: "O scholar! Yajna is the

act that purifies. The oblations and ghee offered in Yajna take a subtle form and purify the universe and all beings. It sustains the world and, by giving supreme happiness to the universe (Driahsva), it grows."

Swami Ram Swarup expressed concern that "it is a matter of sorrow that since the beginning of Kaliyuga, people have abandoned performing

Yajna," even though Yajurveda Mantra 1/2 also carries God's command that the Yajman and the Veda-knowing scholars must never abandon Yajna, the most exalted of all deeds.

"But what can be said? By abandoning Yajna, we in Bharatvarsha have become isolated and alone. The Supreme Lord, who is our protector and giver of happiness, has abandoned us and is giving us sorrow," he said. He concluded with the hard truth from Yajurveda Mantra 2/23, where Parameshwar says that whoever abandons Yajna, God also abandons them in order to give them sorrow.

Jasrotia attends Radha Krishna Murti Pranapratishta ceremony at Kathua

Temples reconnect devotees with Sanatan Dharma; event highlights cultural unity and spiritual heritage

Kathua, Apr 23: MLA Jasrotia, today participated in the ongoing Shri Radha Krishna Murti Pranapratishta Ceremony at Tandyani, Chhann Rodian in District Kathua, Jammu and Kashmir. The five-day religious event, being held from April 20 to 24, has drawn large gatherings of devotees and dignitaries, reflecting the deep spiritual ethos of the region. The ceremony witnessed the presence of several eminent personalities, including Hon'ble MLA Narendra Annasaheb Patil, who holds Minister-level status in Maharashtra as Chairman of the Annasaheb Patil Financial Corporation. The event has been supported by Dogra Samaj Trust, Mumbai, along with various social and cultural organizations. On the occasion, Rajiv Jasrotia paid obeisance and emphasized that such temple ceremonies play a vital role in reconnecting society with the timeless values of Sanatan



Dharma. He stated that temples are not merely places of worship but centres of culture, faith, and social harmony, which bind communities together across generations. He appreciated the collective efforts of the organizers and local residents for successfully conducting the programme with devotion and discipline. Highlighting the significance of Murti Pranapratishta, Jasrotia noted that consecration

ceremonies revive ancient traditions and strengthen spiritual consciousness among the people, especially the younger generation. He added that in today's fast-changing world, such religious gatherings serve as a reminder of India's rich cultural heritage and enduring philosophical roots. The programme also witnessed participation from Neeti Dogra, Advisor J&K Dogra Samaj Trust, Mumbai,

along with other prominent personalities including Gulshan Sharma, Vice President Mathadi Workers Junior (Patpedhi), Vikram Sharma, and Krishna Pandit, President Dogra Samaj Trust, Mumbai.

As part of the schedule, a Shobha Yatra was taken out on April 20 from Chhann Rodian to Airkhan, witnessing enthusiastic participation from devotees. Evening satyangs held on April 22 and 23 further enriched the spiritual atmosphere with devotional songs and religious discourses. The Pranapratishta ceremony, marking the consecration of the idols of Lord Radha and Lord Krishna, continues to attract devotees in large numbers. The event stands as a symbol of faith, unity, and cultural revival, reaffirming the enduring connection between temples and the foundational values of Sanatan Dharma.

PTTI Vijaypur holds valediction of four courses

VIJAYPUR 23rd April 2026: Four Training Courses concluded at Police Technical Training Institute (PTTI) Vijaypur. The concluded courses are "PWCC-Level-I of Telecommunication", Access Control Course, Role Based Training Course on CCTNS" and Traffic Refresher Course in which 95 police Personnel from various units/wings of J&K Police participated. The objective of these courses were to hone the skills of Police personnel and enhance their capabilities in performing the technical/field duties effectively. On this occasion a valedictory function was organized at the Institute which was graced by Sh. Ranjit Singh



Sambyal-IPS, Principal PTTI Vijaypur who while speaking on the occasion congratulated the trainees for successful completion of their training course and stressed upon them to work with more zeal and dedication at their respec-

tive place of postings. The officers included Sh. Satish Kumar D y S P (I n d o r) , Khushwant Singh-DySP (Outdoor/Admn) and SrPO Asif Iqbal of the Institute were present on the occasion.

Dr Manohar flags water crisis, questions BJP's 'false narrative' on women reservation

Highlights year-long water shortage, slow relief for flood victims

Billawar, Apr 23: Senior Congress leader and former Minister Dr. Manohar Lal Sharma, during his extensive tour of Billawar and Rankote tehsils, raised pressing civic concerns and sharply criticized the BJP-led government for what he termed as governance failures and misleading narratives. Visiting villages including Thanhu, Barota, Ghar, Tarkar, and SC Mohalla Kough, Dr. Sharma interacted with residents and took stock of their long-pending grievances. One of the most serious issues highlighted during the visit was the prolonged drinking water crisis in Modia Ghar of village Kough. Dr. Sharma stated that

it has been more than a year since residents have been facing an acute shortage of water supply. "Despite repeated appeals and representations, the authorities have failed to restore a regular water supply. People, especially women and elderly residents, are forced to walk long distances daily to fetch water, which is unacceptable in this day and age," he said. He added that such neglect reflects a complete breakdown of basic service delivery and insensitivity towards rural hardships. The former Minister also pointed out that the incomplete link road from Thakur Dwara to Ghar village continues to



inconvenience the local population, affecting mobility, access to healthcare, and economic activities. He urged the administration to expedite the completion of the road and address infrastructure gaps on priority.

Referring to the damage caused by recent heavy rains and flash floods, Dr. Sharma expressed concern over the delay in compensation to affected families. He said many households whose homes were damaged

are still awaiting relief, forcing them to live in distress. "Timely compensation is not a favour but a responsibility of the government. The delay is adding to the suffering of already distressed families," he remarked.

Launching a strong attack on the BJP, Dr. Sharma termed its claims on women's reservation and empowerment as a "false narrative." He said that while the government projects itself as a champion of women's rights, the situation on the ground in Jammu and Kashmir tells a different story. "Women in rural areas are still struggling for basic amenities like water, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities. If empowerment is real, why are women still bearing the burden of failed governance?" he questioned.

He further stated that genuine empowerment cannot be achieved through announcements alone, but requires con-

sistent policy implementation, economic support, and improved living conditions. He emphasized that women in J&K UT continue to face challenges such as unemployment, lack of access to quality education, and inadequate healthcare, which remain largely unaddressed.

Dr. Sharma also raised broader concerns about rising unemployment among youth, inflation, and ineffective implementation of welfare schemes. He said that people across the region are facing increasing hardship, while the government continues to focus on publicity rather than addressing real issues.

DC Bandipora reviews VVP-II, Aspirational Block Programme & CAPEX at Badugam Engages public, assesses developmental needs in Tulail

BANDIPORA, APRIL 23: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, on Wednesday chaired a comprehensive review meeting at Guest House R&B Badugam, Tulail, to assess the implementation of Vibrant Village Programme (VVP-II), Aspirational Block Programme and CAPEX works, as part of her ongoing tour of Sub-Division Gurez.

The meeting was attended by senior officers including PO ICDS Bandipora, SDM Gurez, Principal GDC Tulail, ACP, CMO, CEO, DSHO, Executive Engineers of PMGSY and KPDC, officers from Agriculture,



Animal Husbandry, NRLM, Forest, ITI, Tourism, Banking and other line departments.

During the meeting, officers presented detailed proposals and sector-wise plans for inclusion under the Vibrant Village Programme. It was

informed that 29 villages are being covered under the programme across four thematic areas, with 26 villages already covered and 3 pending. The Deputy Commissioner reviewed proposals related to infrastructure development, tourism promotion, agriculture and allied sectors, education, skill development and livelihood generation. Thredbare discussions were held on key projects including PMGSY Phase-IV roads, electrification under RDSS, mobile connectivity in border areas, and strengthening of health and education infrastructure. The DC emphasized timely completion of works, better inter-departmental coordination, avoidance of duplication in funding, and efficient utilization of resources. Reviewing sectoral issues, the Deputy Commissioner directed departments to focus on tangible infrastructure improvements rather than mere procurement, and asked all departments to submit revised action plans within a stipulated timeframe. She also stressed the need for saturation of developmental indicators, including completion of girls' toilets in schools, healthcare facilities, and essential services in remote areas. The meeting also deliberated on livelihood generation initiatives under NRLM, promotion of agriculture, animal husbandry, wool processing, and development of medicinal plants. Officers were directed to identify beneficiaries, ensure bank linkage, and facilitate skill training and entrepreneurship among youth.

MLA Sonawari lays foundation stones for key infrastructure projects in Ajas

BANDIPORA, APRIL 23: Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Sonawari, Advocate Hilal Akbar Lone, on Thursday laid the foundation stones for several important developmental works in Ajas area of Bandipora district. The projects include construction of a motorable bridge over Baji Khul at an estimated cost of Rs 48.89 lakh, construction of Tehsil Office Ajas at Rs 70.16 lakh, and construction of Niabat Office Ajas at Rs 15 lakh. The proposed motorable bridge is aimed at improving connectivity to presently unconnected areas, thereby benefiting a large population. The construction of dedicated buildings for Tehsil and Niabat offices will address the existing constraint of functioning



from rented accommodations and is expected to enhance administrative efficiency and public service delivery. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA reiterated his commitment towards strengthening infrastructure and ensuring better governance at the grassroots level. The MLA was accompanied by Executive Engineer R&B Sumbal, Tehsildar Ajas and Assistant Executive Engineer R&B Sumbal.

SANKALP HEW conducts on-the-spot PMMVV portal issue resolution session in Bandipora

BANDIPORA, APRIL 23: SANKALP - Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW), Mission Shakti, Department of Social Welfare Bandipora, in collaboration with the Child Development Project Office (CDPO) Bandipora, today conducted an on-the-spot issue resolution session to address technical challenges faced by ICDS workers and supervisors in PMMVV portal entries.

An expert from SANKALP HEW, provided hands-on technical support and assisted participants individually and resolved various portal-related issues on the spot, facilitating smoother and more efficient data entry. The session witnessed active participation of



Anganwadi Workers and Supervisors, who benefited from practical guidance and step-by-step support. Officials highlighted the importance of accurate and timely data entry under PMMVV to ensure timely disbursement of benefits to eligible beneficiaries. Awareness regarding various schemes of the Social Welfare Department and other line departments was also imparted, with emphasis on strengthening outreach at the grassroots level.

Massive Awareness Rally, Street Play organized under Nasha Mukta Abhiyan at Kangan

GANDERBAL, APRIL 23: In a major push to strengthen the campaign against drug abuse, the Sub-Divisional Administration Kangan today organized a mega Nasha Mukta awareness rally and street play at Government Boys Higher Secondary School Kangan. The event was part of the ongoing 100-day 'Nasha Mukta Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan' aimed at fostering a drug-free society and educating the youth about the devastating effects of narcotics.

The proceedings commenced with a massive rally that started from the Government Degree College Kangan and culminated at the Higher Secondary School premises. The rally was led by



Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Sheikh Salahuddin, alongside Sub-Divisional Magistrate Kangan, Nazir Ahmad Bhat, and Chief Education Officer, Oneel Kumar Bhat. A large number of officers and officials from various departments, per-

sonnel from the police department, and enthusiastic students from multiple schools across the subdivision participated in the march, carrying banners and chanting slogans to promote a healthy, drug-free lifestyle. To further the message of the campaign, impactful skits were performed by the students of Islamic Revival High School Kangan, Kids Cottage High School Wussan, and Sheikh Ul Alam Public High School. The performances vividly depicted the social and physical consequences of drug addiction, drawing significant appreciation from the audience for their emotional depth and clarity. Sheikh Ul Alam Public High School clinched the first position for their creative contributions to the awareness program. Speaking on the occasion, Assistant Commissioner Revenue emphasized the collective responsibility of the administration, educators, and parents in protecting the younger generation from the menace of substance abuse. He highlighted that such initiatives are crucial for building a resilient community and ensuring a brighter future for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

MLA Bandipora visits GBHSS Kaloosa, Leads Nasha Mukta Bharat Awareness Drive

BANDIPORA, APRIL 23: MLA Bandipora, Advocate Nizamuddin Bhat, today visited NM Government Boys Higher Secondary School (GBHSS), where he participated in the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (NMBAA) pledge and awareness programme organized by the school.

Attending the event as Chief Guest, MLA was accorded a warm welcome by the school administration and students. The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation, with students taking a pledge to work towards building a drug-free society.

An alumnus of the institution, Advocate Nizamuddin Bhat turned nostalgic as he shared memories of his student life. He fondly recalled his school days and spoke about several notable personalities who



were once his classmates. He described the school as one of the most prestigious institutions in the district, appreciating its consistent

legacy of academic excellence. In his address, MLA delivered an inspiring message, urging students to remain disciplined, focused, and committed to their goals while actively participating in social causes, particularly the fight against drug abuse.

On the occasion, he announced financial assistance for the school's development, including Rs 2 lakh for furniture, Rs 1 lakh for the construction of a girls' toilet, and Rs 50,000 for sports facilities. He further extended support by donating an interactive panel board worth Rs 1.5 lakh on the spot to strengthen digital learning infrastructure. The Principal, Reyaz Ahmad Lone, expressed sincere gratitude to the MLA for his continued support towards the institution's growth and development.

First ever Mobile Passport Services launched in Shopian

SHOPIAN, APRIL 23: In a significant step towards enhancing citizen centric services, the Mobile Passport Seva services were inaugurated today by the Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Shishir Gupta at Mim Secretariat Shopian. The inauguration was held in the presence of Regional Passport Officer Srinagar, B.S. Rawat and other officers and officials of district administration and Regional Passport Office, Srinagar.

The initiative brought passport services closer to the public, benefiting more than 50 applicants of the district on day one. A dedicated team from the Regional Passport Office



Srinagar was present on the occasion to facilitate smooth operations. The Mobile Passport Van service will be held for two days, during which more than 100 applicants have booked appointments to avail passport related services. During the programme, feedback was

actively collected from applicants regarding their experience. It was assured that such Mobile Passport Van services will be organized regularly in the district, depending upon the demand from the local public, to ensure continued accessibility and convenience for the public.

CEO KDA reviews Development Works across Key Tourist Spots

ANANTNAG APRIL 23: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Kokernag Development Authority (KDA), Mohammad Rouf Rahman, yesterday conducted an extensive tour of various important tourist locations under KDA to review the on-ground progress of ongoing work. Accompanied by staff and R&B engineers, the tour commenced at Mirza Swami Kaakh Temple Trust, Hangalgund, where the CEO, along with members of the Kashmiri Pandit community, inspected the premises. On the occasion, a newly constructed 4-seater toilet block was handed over to the Trust, addressing a long-pending requirement for pilgrims visiting the temple in large numbers. Later, the CEO visited Vatloo Main Chowk and conducted a spot inspection to resolve issues related to the location and construction of toilet blocks near the main road and Jamia Masjid. The matter was settled amicably on the spot. The CEO also visited Daksum, where he reviewed the progress of the KDA cafeteria and the



construction of concrete steps leading up to the hutment area of KDA, Tourism Department, and JKTC. The visit was attended by local residents, shopkeepers, hoteliers, and officials from R&B and KDA. During the tour, the CEO also visited Dandipora Park and directed KDA officials to ensure its proper upkeep and maintenance. He emphasized preparing the park to welcome tourists and visitors from across Jammu & Kashmir and beyond, with improved facilities and a clean aesthetic environment.

KVK Budgam organizes Input Distribution programme under Tribal Sub Plan

BUDGAM, APRIL 23: Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Budgam, under the leadership of Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-K, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai and in collaboration with the TSP-ICAR project 'Promotion of Natural Farming in Tribal farmers of Kashmir' successfully conducted a comprehensive training and input distribution programme to tribal farmers belonging to villages Tral and Sangerwani of district Pulwama. The initiative was designed to empower tribal farmers by equipping them with high-quality inputs to boost productivity and ensure sustainable livelihoods, through Natural Farming practices. The programme was presided over by Prof. Raihana Habib Kanth, Director Extension, SKUAST-K,



who was the chief guest on the occasion besides Prof. Javeed Ahmad Mughlo, Professor & Head, ETC & KVK Pulwama and Scientists from both KVKs were also present. In her address, Prof. Raihana Habib

highlighted SKUAST-Kashmir's continued efforts towards the upliftment of tribal farming communities. She emphasized the critical role of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) in promoting climate-resilient agriculture and improving

livelihood security. She added that KVKs are playing a pivotal role in transforming the lives of tribal farmers by introducing innovative, sustainable practices and providing timely access to quality agricultural inputs. She stressed on the importance of adopting scientific practices for achieving sustainable agricultural growth and improving rural livelihoods.

Prof. Javeed Ahmad Mughlo, Head, ETC & KVK Pulwama in his address highlighted the objectives of the Tribal Sub Plan, emphasizing the commitment of ICAR and SKUAST-Kashmir towards improving the livelihoods of tribal farming communities through location-specific technologies, capacity building and input support.

North in News

EDITORIAL

Like IPL promoted cricket, other sports also needs the same boost

The Indian Premier League transformed cricket from a seasonal sport into a year round cultural and economic powerhouse, and that same model of packaging, investment, visibility, and grassroots connection is exactly what other sports in India now need to reach the next level. Because IPL did not succeed only due to sixes and celebrities but due to a carefully built ecosystem that combined city based loyalty, short and entertaining formats, prime time television, global talent, local heroes, corporate sponsorship, data driven marketing, and a clear path from gully cricket to stadium fame. Before IPL cricket in India was strong but its domestic structure struggled for crowds, sponsors, and television ratings, and players outside the national team earned modest money and limited recognition. When Hockey India League started it showed promise by bringing international stars, improving turf quality, and creating city franchises, but inconsistent scheduling and withdrawal of sponsors slowed momentum, which proves that a one time push is not enough. Football is another example where the Indian Super League lifted standards by upgrading stadiums, hiring foreign coaches, and putting Indian players alongside experienced internationals, and attendance in places like Kerala, Goa, and the Northeast proved that regional passion for football is real, yet the challenge remains to connect the top league with the I League and with school and university football so that a 14 year old in Jammu or Mizoram can see a transparent path from district trials to ISL contracts. Badminton has shown how individual brilliance can be scaled when the Premier Badminton League gave Saina Nehwal, P V Sindhu, Kidambi Srikanth, and Lakshya Sen a team environment that drew families to watch a shuttle sport in prime time, and sponsors discovered that badminton offers a clean, fast, urban audience, and the next step is to move beyond a two week event toward a longer season with home and away games. Sports like volleyball and basketball have tried leagues but need to shorten matches, add music and data graphics, and train commentators to explain rules simply, and beyond format the financial model must be sustainable. Kabaddi, kho kho, table tennis, and archery can get the same reach that television gave cricket in 2008, and a ten second clip of a perfect raid or a 70 meter javelin throw can also create a new fan. Women's sports need a parallel boost because the Women's Premier League showed that crowds will come for women's cricket if the product is strong, and similar leagues in football, hockey, kabaddi, and basketball can correct decades of neglect. If this is honestly accepted then the next IPL like story will not be only in cricket, it will be in hockey, football, kabaddi, badminton, wrestling, and athletics, and India will finally play to its full potential.

RAJNI SHARMA, EDITOR

From Panchayat to Parliament: Women's Leadership, Digital Governance and the Vision of Viksit Bharat



PROF. S. P. SINGH BAGHEL

When a nation nurtures its roots, its branches reach for the sky. The roots of India are its Panchayats, and the soul of those Panchayats today is its women. On 24 April 1993, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment gave constitutional recognition to village governance, writing a new chapter in Indian democracy. Over three decades later, Panchayati Raj Institutions have evolved far beyond administrative units - they have become living laboratories of social transformation, economic development and democratic participation. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Panchayati Raj has been infused with new energy and purpose. He has ensured that power reaches not merely the corridors of Delhi, but the doorstep of the last village in the country. The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 is built on the foundation of over 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats, which serve as the lifeline for nearly 64 per cent of India's population.

The School of Democracy: The Rise of Women's Leadership
National Panchayati Raj Day 2026 is being celebrated with a special sense of pride. At the Nari Shakti Vandan Sammelan, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi called Panchayati Raj Institutions the greatest school of women's leadership in the country - an acknowledgment of a transformation that unfolds every single day across rural India.

Across the country, the total number of elected representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions exceeds 32 lakh. As per the latest available data, of the 24,41,781 elected representatives currently in office, 12,14,885 are women,

accounting for nearly 49.75 per cent of the total. Twenty-one States and two Union Territories have extended reservation for women to 50 per cent, going beyond the constitutionally mandated one-third. Over the past four years, 33.50 lakh women representatives have received specialised leadership and governance training. In 2025-26 alone, 9.37 lakh women representatives were trained - a 47.7 per cent increase over the previous year. Their focused work on education, health, sanitation, nutrition and women's safety has given rural development a new and purposeful direction.

Sashakt Panchayat Netri Abhiyan and the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam

The Sashakt Panchayat Netri Abhiyan equips elected women representatives with awareness of their constitutional rights, responsibilities and leadership capabilities. Complementary initiatives - Women-Friendly Gram Panchayat and Nirbhaya Raho, implemented under the Nirbhaya Fund - integrate legal awareness, social sensitisation and technological empowerment to build a safe environment for women in rural governance. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam, envisaging 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, permanently anchors their role in Indian democracy. The women leaders forged in the school of Panchayats will become the harbingers of change in legislatures and Parliament.

Sixteenth Finance Commission: A Quantum Jump in Resources

Financial empowerment is the lifeblood of any institution's effectiveness. The Sixteenth Finance Commission has made an unprecedented allocation of Rs 4.35 lakh crore for rural local bodies for 2026 to 2031 - approximately 84 per cent higher than the Fifteenth Finance Commission. In 2026-27 alone, grants of Rs 1.40 lakh crore have been allocated. The thrust on Own Sources of Revenue (OSR) and performance-based grants has together fostered accountability and healthy competition among Panchayats.

Inclusive and Transparent Governance

The guiding mantra of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas aur Sabka Prayas underlies every initiative of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Through the eGramSwaraj platform, Gram Panchayats have cumulatively processed online payments of over Rs 3 lakh crore, with more than 2.5 lakh Panchayats and 1.6 crore vendors linked to the platform. Under the Gram Panchayat Development Plan framework, over 2.5 lakh Panchayats prepared their own development plans in 2025-26, localising the Sustainable Development Goals across 9 thematic clusters to make inclusive and sustainable development in rural areas target-oriented and outcome-focused.

PESA Rankings: A New Chapter in Governance of Scheduled Areas

In a landmark initiative, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, for the first time, released State-wise rankings on the performance of States under the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) for 2024-25 on 25 January 2026. The rankings aim to promote healthy competition, strengthen transparency and accountability, and reinforce Gram Sabha-based self-governance in Scheduled Areas.

In the 2024-25 rankings, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh emerged as front runners; Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Telangana were placed in the performer category, while Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat featured in the aspirant category. The rankings cover all ten PESA States and are intended as a constructive tool to highlight progress, institutional capacity and future potential. In the spirit of cooperative federalism, the Ministry continues to work closely with States to support the effective implementation of PESA.

SabhaSaar and AI-Enabled Governance: Democracy in Every Language

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has brought artificial intelligence to the heart of grassroots governance. SabhaSaar, launched on 14 August 2025, is an AI-powered voice-to-text tool that records Gram Sabha proceedings in 23 Indian languages. By January 2026, 1,11,486

Gram Panchayats had already adopted it - language is no longer a barrier to participation in local governance.

SVAMITVA: Economic Empowerment Through Property Rights

The SVAMITVA Scheme has established property rights through drone-based surveys across approximately 3.30 lakh villages, with over 3.13 crore property cards prepared. It is linking rural households with bank credit and the formal financial system, enabling property to be leveraged as an economic asset, reducing land and property-related disputes, and emerging as a sustainable and transparent source of revenue for Gram Panchayats.

Building Institutional Capacity

Under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, a cumulative total of over 1.62 crore elected representatives and functionaries have been trained since 2022-23 - with over 45.24 lakh trained in 2025-26 alone. Partnerships with IIMs and IITs for Leadership and Management Development Programmes reflect a commitment to equipping Panchayat leaders with modern governance skills. Under the Meri Panchayat, Mera Adhikar campaign, over 2.15 lakh Panchayats have prepared citizen charters covering 954 services. The National Panchayat Awards recognise excellence and inspire a culture of continuous improvement. Viksit Bharat 2047: A New Dawn Rising from the Villages The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 encompasses social justice, environmental balance and inclusive progress - not economic growth alone. Women's participation reaching 50 per cent in 21 States, digital transactions of over Rs 3 lakh crore, the voice of Gram Sabhas resonating in 23 languages, the historic allocations of the Sixteenth Finance Commission, and the Sashakt Panchayat Netri Abhiyan - together these are the building blocks upon which the edifice of Viksit Bharat 2047 will rise. On this occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day, we salute the more than 14 lakh women representatives who work tirelessly every day to make their villages and their country a better place. This is Nari Shakti. This is the preparation of Naya Bharat.

The quiet practice of sustaining yourself daily

BY SHARMILA DAS

There are days when the world seems to have misplaced its instruction manual. Nothing is dramatically broken, yet nothing feels entirely in place. Emails multiply with suspicious enthusiasm, conversations trail off unfinished, and beneath it all lingers a quiet, persistent question: what is the point of all this? On such days, sustainability appears as an abstract idea - something debated in policy rooms and global summits, distant from the lived reality of a restless mind and an over-worked body.

But what if sustainability begins much closer to home? Closer than policies or pledges. Closer than climate targets and

conscious consumption. What if it begins with the simple act of sustaining oneself? At first glance, that sounds almost too easy. After all, we are functioning-moving through our routines with reasonable efficiency. Yet a more honest look reveals something else: we are often running on fragments of attention, borrowed energy, and a body that has quietly learned not to interrupt. This is where yoga enters the frame-not as a performance of perfect postures, but as a gentle interruption to this slow depletion.

It begins with something disarmingly simple: the breath. A slow inhale, followed by a slightly longer exhale. It can feel underwhelming, even inadequate, as if something so basic

cannot possibly address the complexity of modern life. But the breath, in yogic practice, is not merely physiological-it is connective. It bridges the gap between a mind that races ahead and a body that struggles to keep pace. In its steady rhythm, attention begins to return.

We rarely lose attention all at once. It slips away in fragments-through notifications, distractions, and thoughts that lead nowhere useful. By day's end, exhaustion often comes not from effort, but from dispersion. The breath gathers this scattered energy, gently but persistently, calling the mind back.

Soon, the body joins this quiet process. For too long, it has been relegated to the back-

ground, consulted only when it protests. Yoga shifts that relationship, inviting the body into awareness. A stretch reveals tension long held. A bend uncovers forgotten spaces. A moment of imbalance reminds us that stability is not fixed, but practised. In this rediscovery, there is even a touch of humour-the realisation that your shoulders have been holding on to conversations long finished, or that your spine, given attention, can move with ease. Movement, then, becomes more than exercise; it becomes restoration. Between breath and movement, the mind, too, begins to soften. Thoughts gather, emotions shift, and clarity feels distant. The instinct is often to suppress or spiral.

PYS organized Earth Day 2026 celebration at Kuh Nalla



UDHAMPUR, APR 23: Progressive Youth Society (Regd.) Rannagar District Udhampur JK organized well-planned function in Bansri Memorial Public School Kuh Nalla (Rannagar) in collaboration with Ministry of Earth Sciences (Govt. of India) so to celebrate Earth Day 2026 on the topic of "Our Power-Our Planet". CL Sharma (Ex-Director Horticulture Jammu)

was the Chief Guest. Dr Jagdish Raj Panotra (Nodal Officer ATL Director School Education Jammu) was the Guest of Honour. The programme started with a rally of students, teachers and local people carrying play cards and chanting slogans followed by debate and drawing/painting contest in which 22 students took part. Mansi Sharma bagged first prize of Rs. 3000/- whereas



Mansi Atri & Meenakshi bagged second prize of Rs. 2000/- each. Priya Devi, Aarav Thakur and Neelhi Thakur bagged third prize of Rs 1000/- each. Cash prizes and certificates were distributed on spot by the Chief Guest and President Progressive Youth Society, Uttam Singh "Albela" and Dr Jagdish Raj Panotra threw light on the topic in detail whereas CL Sharma

Chief Guest in his address also elaborated on the topic (Our Power-Our Planet) with significance of earth and stressed on its protection. Suresh Kumar Member PYS and Sandeep Singh VET also coordinated the whole event. Garbage in and around the school premises was collected by the organisers which was handed over to Saddam Hussain (CEO Municipal Council Udhampur) in a transparent envelope having logo of Ministry of Earth Sciences.

The programme ended with a pledge on the topic solemnized by the Chief Guest. Manoj Kumar Shaha "Nishchin" President Progressive Youth Society presented vote of thanks.

Omar govt Fast Tracking development in Chenab region: Javed Rana

JAMMU, APRIL 23: Senior leader of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and Hon'ble Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest & Tribal Affairs, Javed Rana, asserted that the Chenab region is witnessing a transformative infrastructural push under the Omar-led government. He emphasized that this development surge is strategically anchored in boosting tourism, strengthening potable water access, and advancing tribal welfare—signaling what he described as a "holistic and people-centric governance model" for the region. He was addressing a massive meeting of General Public / Party functionaries at Batote during the first leg of his five-day tour of the Chenab region. Rattan Lal Gupta, Provincial President Jammu Start tour programme 1st Day at Batote. The meeting was organized and chaired by Abid Magray District President Ramban. Among others, party legislators Sajjad Shaheen MLA Banihal and Arjun Singh Raju Hon'ble MLA Ramban, along with senior leaders, Dr. Shamshad Shan former DDC

Chairperson Ramban, Abdul Gani Teli Chairman OBC Cell and Arif Mir Provincial Secretary Jammu were present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, Rana said the Omar-led government has brought a renewed and results-driven focus on the Chenab region, prioritizing the upgradation of tourism infrastructure and ensuring the delivery of essential civic amenities, particularly potable water. He noted that the administration has decisively moved beyond "symbolic tokenism" in tribal affairs to a framework of tangible development and meaningful outreach. government is working on a multi-pronged strategy to unlock the development and tourism potential of the Chenab region. Eco-parks are being conceptualized across key locations, while long-pending potable water schemes stalled during the previous regime have been revived—many are already functional and others nearing completion," he said.

Highlighting tribal welfare, Rana added that communities in the region

are once again at the center of policymaking. "The biggest achievement of the Omar government is restoring a sense of belonging among the people of Chenab. They feel heard, seen, and prioritized by an elected government that believes in delivery, not rhetoric," he remarked.

He urged party workers to amplify the government's achievements at the grassroots level and counter what he termed as "misleading narratives." "The opposition is working overtime to distort facts because the pace and scale of our governance have unsettled them. Our workers must take the truth to every doorstep," he added. Speaking on the occasion, Rattan Lal Gupta underscored that good governance under Omar Abdullah has laid the foundation for inclusive growth in the Chenab region. "Development cannot take root without trust and transparency, and this government has ensured both while strengthening communal harmony, which remains the bedrock of progress in this region," he said.

Historic achievement: Jammu Division books 28 parcel vans for Bandra Terminus



JAMMU, APR 23: Establishing close coordination with cherry fruit growers in Jammu & Kashmir, the Jammu Division of Northern Railway has successfully booked requisitions for 28 parcel vans for the transportation of cherries to Bandra Terminus during the 2026 season. Each parcel van has a capacity of 23 tons. Currently, the processing of these parcel van requisitions for cherries is underway. This represents an increase of approximately 100% compared to the previous season. All 28 requisitions have been duly registered by the users. These requisitions for Bandra Terminus are primarily intended for the cherry season, spanning from May 25 to July 10, for consignments originating from Jammu and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra. Elaborating on the details of this unique initiative: There are 7 requisitions for consignments to be loaded from Jammu to Bandra Terminus. There are 21 requisitions for consignments to be loaded from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra to Bandra Terminus. It is noteworthy that previously, in the year 2025, approximately 14 parcel vans of cherries were transported from Shri Mata Vaishno

Devi Katra to Bandra Terminus via Train No. 12472. This, in itself, marked a historic initiative. This initiative by Indian Railways underscores its commitment to providing the horticulturists of Kashmir with a reliable and efficient means to safely and timely transport their perishable produce to distant markets. Shri Uchit Singhal, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Jammu, stated, "The year 2026 is set to be another historic year for the Jammu Division. Our continuous dialogue and coordination with fruit growers in Kashmir are yielding consistently successful results. We have registered 28 requisitions for Bandra Terminus for the current cherry season—a figure that represents a remarkable increase compared to last year. Our primary objective was to provide the horticulturists of Kashmir with a safe and rapid mode of transport, free from the uncertainties associated with road travel. This service will run directly from Jammu and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra. Elaborating on the details of this unique initiative: There are 7 requisitions for consignments to be loaded from Jammu to Bandra Terminus. There are 21 requisitions for consignments to be loaded from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra to Bandra Terminus. It is noteworthy that previously, in the year 2025, approximately 14 parcel vans of cherries were transported from Shri Mata Vaishno

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE

For 270-4011 JAT (and on behalf of the President of India) open tenders (E-Tenders) against below listed tenders and available on www.rail.gov.in with closing date 14.05.2026 up to 15:30 hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/signed bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such request will be rejected. Manual payments through Demand Draft/Bank Cheque, Deposit Receipt, PDR etc. are not allowed. For more information visit www.rail.gov.in

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	Two Packet System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Start Bidding Date	End Closing Date/Time
22.04.2026	30.04.2026	14.05.2026 15:30

S. No.	Particulars	Quantity	Unit	Rate
1	Work of various nature (as per specification in form through Sheet No. 2026-1) including PDRs on all various locations of single line and double line (including track bed) with 50 kg axle on PSC-6 sleepers with M-7 density (M-7) with precasted concrete sleepers with PDRs on PSC-6 sleepers (M-7) (PDR) - Construction of PDRs upto 100 km hrs TSSR by PDRS in DG-BRML JAT (location under Sr. DE/JAT)			
	Advertisement Value (Rs.)	Estimated Money (Rs.)	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion
	128635644.04	2527700	30 Days	12 Months

Similar nature of work - "TSSR" (TSSR) including Relaying of track, leveling, dressing of track, etc. & post works for track maintenance (under the scope of maintenance) as per specification in form through Sheet No. 2026-1.

Note: 1. Bidders bidding, tenders to be open for any correspondence issued against work.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Extension of additional coach facility in Rajdhani Express for passenger convenience

JAMMU, APR 23: In view of the anticipated surge in passenger traffic during the coming days and with the objective of ensuring a comfortable journey for travellers—the Jammu Division has decided to temporarily extend the period for attaching an additional coach to Rajdhani Express (Train No. 12425/12426). Previously, a decision had been taken to attach an additional 3AC coach to the Jammu Rajdhani Express for the period spanning from April 25 to April 30. However, in light of the upcoming summer vacations, the duration for which this additional coach will be available has now been extended. This decision will result in an increase in the train's carrying capacity, thereby making it easier for passengers currently on the waiting list to secure confirmed tickets. Regarding the details of the revised composition: The additional 3AC coach will be attached to Train No. 12426 between May 1 and May 8. The Jammu Division continuously assesses passenger demand and requirements for their convenience. Consequently, the duration for the provision of the additional coach on this train has been extended. Passengers may book their tickets through the official website of Indian Railways or via designated reservation centers.

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER REW JAMMU

EOINO.01-SEREW JOF2026-27 Dt: 22-04-2025

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR EMPANELMENT OF STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT

On behalf of the Lt. Governor, Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, application sare invited through tendering mode from the interested & eligible Structural design firms/individuals for rempanelment as structural consultant for providing Structural consultancy, Design and drawings for different structures of Rural Development Department Jammu. The empanelment shall remain valid for a period of One year (1 year) from the date of empanelment and further extendable. Documents containing the scope of work, eligibility criteria and other terms & conditions can be downloaded from website www.jktenders.gov.in from 1800 Hrs 23-04-2026 to 04-05-2026 upto 1800 Hrs.

The applications with all prequalification documents shall be deposited in electronic format from 1800 Hrs 23-04-2026 to 04-05-2026 upto 1800 Hrs. The cost of the documents shall be Rs. 1000/- (= Rupees One thousand only) in shape of Treasury challan through treasury by crediting to (MH 0515) Revenue favouring Superintending Engineer, REW Jammu indicating the Name of the Work and NIT Number.

The bidders shall upload scanned copy of below mentioned documents.

- Scanned copy of document cost deposit receipt in the shape of Treasury challan through treasury by crediting to (MH 0515) Revenue favouring Superintending Engineer, REW Jammu indicating the Name of the Work and NIT Number.
- Scanned Copy of GST Registration in case of annual turnover of more than 40 lacs. In case turn over is less than 40 lacs, then self attested declaration need to be attached.
- Scanned Copy of PAN Card.
- Income Tax return for the Financial Year 2025-26 (Assessment Year 2026-27).
- Scanned copy of experience certificate of completed works along with their project cost for the last 05 years in STRUCTURAL FIELD duly issued by an Officer not less than the rank of Executive Engineer in case of Government works and Senior Executive in case of Corporate Sector work.
- Scanned copy of B.Tech/BE (Civil Engineering) degree certificate from reputed University for applicant / listed employee in case of firm
- The Applicant has to attach certificates showing consultancy provided for completed projects of multistoreyed buildings during the last 5 years with their cost mentioned below:
 - At least 02 projects of Multistoreyed buildings costing not less than Rs.3.00 Crore
 - At least 03 projects each costing not less than Rs 1.00 crore (each). A certificate in this regard needs to be attached issued by an officer not less than the rank of Executive Engineer in case of Corporate Sector works
- Applicant has to be a single entity and no joint venture is allowed
- All documents to be submitted should be initialed by the Authorized Signatory
- In case of firm/organization, scanned copy of details about their staff design facilities etc should be enclosed
- Proof of Address in the shape of (a) Copy of Aadhaar Card, (b) Copy of Ration Card, (c) Copy of Electricity Bill/Landline/Telephone Bill, etc

The successful bidder will have to deposit an amount of Rs 100000/= (One Lakh only) in the shape of CDR/FDR pledged to the Superintending Engineer, Rural Engineering Wing, Jammu till the validity of the contract (i.e. One year), before issuance of the empanelment.

The Hard copies of the tender documents with cost of document shall be submitted by the L1 bidder only in a sealed cover superscribing "Request for EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR EMPANELMENT OF STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT FOR STRUCTURES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT JAMMU by the successful bidder in the Office of Superintending Engineer, Rural Engineering Wing, Jammu by hand within 03 days.

Bids will be opened online on 05-05-2026 at 1400 Hrs in the Office of Superintending Engineer, Rural Engineering Wing, Jammu.

Any other information regarding tendering process can be had from the Office of Superintending Engineer REW Jammu.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer
Rural Engineering Wing
Jammu

No: SE/REW/J/26-27/251-263

Dt: 22-04-2026

DIP/J-1003/26

ICC chair Jay Shah hails Knight Riders' LA stadium project

New Delhi, Apr 23: A new chapter for cricket in the United States began on Wednesday, as the ground-breaking ceremony for the Knight Riders Cricket Ground was held in Pomona, California, with ICC chief executive Sanjog Gupta describing the venue as "cricket's home for LA28." The venue is expected to play a key role in the lead-up to the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, where cricket will return after 128 years. The event took place just over a month after it was confirmed that the Los Angeles Knight Riders will use the ground as their home venue for the 2026 Major League Cricket (MLC) season. According to a statement from the Knight Riders, the devel-



opment represents "a landmark moment for cricket in the United States" and highlights Los Angeles as an emerging hub for the sport. International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman Jay Shah described the occasion as an important milestone in cricket's global journey. "These are very exciting times for the game of cricket as it makes giant strides in establishing itself as a global sport. Our focus has been on expanding the footprint of cricket and being part of the Olympic movement is something that brings both pride and dreams with it," Shah said in a statement. "The groundbreaking marks an important milestone in cricket's return to the Olympics and is a proud moment for all ICC members and stakeholders worldwide. We're con-

dent this venue will take centre stage during the Games and leave a legacy for cricket in the USA," he added. Initially, the venue at Fairplex will host matches for LAKR in the upcoming MLC season, with a total of seven games scheduled, including the team's first three home fixtures between July 1 and July 5. Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, who is a co-owner of Knight Riders Sports, said the project goes beyond just building a stadium. "Today isn't just about breaking ground, but about beginning a dream - bringing cricket, the second most-watched sport in the world, into the heart of Los Angeles' sporting identity," he said. "Through our long-term partnership with Fairplex,

we aim to create not just a cricket ground, but a space of energy, community, and belonging." Knight Riders Sports CEO Venky Mysore called it a defining moment for the franchise and the sport in the country. "This is a defining moment, not just for the Knight Riders, but for cricket in America. We see strong potential to grow the game and connect with the community in Southern California to lead this next phase of cricket's growth in the US," Mysore said. Sanjog Gupta, who was also present at the ceremony, highlighted the broader significance of the project in the context of the Olympics. "The journey over the next two years will see many such milestones which enhance the sense of occasion.

Thursara withdraws case against SLC over IPL NOC

New Delhi, Apr 23:



Nuwan Thushara has withdrawn his lawsuit against Sri Lanka Cricket, just a few weeks after filing it over being denied a no-objection certificate (NOC) to feature in the ongoing season of the Indian Premier League (IPL). Thushara is part of Royal Challengers Bengaluru, who are yet to name a replacement for the 31-year-old fast bowler. According to a report in ESPNcricinfo, Thushara informed the Colombo District Court that he wanted to withdraw the case since a large part of the IPL season had already passed. It is also understood that he sent a written apology to SLC last week, indicating his intention to step back from the legal dispute. In his original petition, Thushara had expressed a

desire to retire from international cricket. It is not yet clear whether that decision still stands. In any case, under SLC's current fitness rules, he would not be eligible for selection unless he meets the required standards. SLC had refused to grant him the NOC because he did not meet their fitness criteria. Thushara had argued that his fitness levels were similar to previous years, during which he had not faced such restrictions.

During this standoff, Thushara had signalled his intention to retire and soon after filed the lawsuit. He claimed that enforcing fitness-based NOC requirements in this manner was unreasonable and affected his livelihood. The timing of the case, filed on April 2, also drew attention as it coincided with the Easter court holidays, making a quick resolution unlikely. The matter was taken up again on April 9, when SLC said it would file its objections.

Are BCCI schedules killing players? Lalit Modi rips into 'outrageous scheduling'

New Delhi, Apr 23:

Amid the packed schedule of the Indian men's cricket team, former IPL chairman Lalit Modi has slammed the BCCI for what he called "outrageous scheduling", warning that players are being pushed to the brink. Modi's remarks come amid reports that India head coach Gautam Gambhir and captain Shubman Gill are unhappy with the scheduling of a Test against Afghanistan just days after the conclusion of IPL 2026, raising concerns over workload and recovery. Reacting to reports of



senior players potentially being "texted" due to burnout, Modi urged the board to prioritise player welfare over commercial demands. "I agree. The BCCI are killing their players with the hectic scheduling. Guys stop this outrageous scheduling you are putting the boys

SAI backs India's Thomas & Uber Cup campaign with Rs 1.45 crore support ahead of Denmark Finals

New Delhi, Apr 23:

Boosting India's ambitions on the global badminton stage, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) has stepped in with Rs 1.45 crore in support for the upcoming BWF Thomas and Uber Cup Finals, scheduled in Horsens, Denmark, from April 24 to May 3. A 34-member Indian contingent, comprising 20 players, five coaches, and nine support staff, will travel for the prestigious team championships. The squad features top shuttlers including PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen, Kidambi Srikanth, and the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, along with several emerging players from the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) Core and Development groups.



India's men have been placed in Group C alongside Canada, Australia, and China in the Thomas Cup, while the women's team will compete against Denmark, Ukraine, and China in the Uber Cup. The financial assistance, approved under the TOPS

programme, covers airfare, accommodation, visa charges, accreditation, daily allowances, insurance, food, and other logistical expenses for the entire contingent. SAI has also ensured a comprehensive support set-up, with specialised coaches, physiotherapists, trainers, and

masses accompanying the teams. India enters the competition with strong momentum, having created history in 2022 by winning the Thomas Cup for the first time after defeating Indonesia in the final, marking a breakthrough moment for Indian badminton on the global stage. The 2026 edition carries added significance as badminton will not feature in the 2026 Commonwealth Games. Looking ahead, India is set to host the Commonwealth Games in 2030, where the sport is expected to play a key role. India squads: Thomas Cup: Lakshya Sen, Ayush Shetty, Kidambi Srikanth, HS Prannoy, Kiran George, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty, Hariharan Amsakarunan, MR Arjun, Dhruv Kapila

RCB aim to reignite firepower against unsettled Gujarat Titans

New Delhi, Apr 23:

Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru will be eyeing a batting resurgence when they take on an equally inconsistent Gujarat Titans in their Indian Premier League (IPL) match at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on Friday, in what has been an evenly matched contest between the two sides over the years.



RCB and GT have faced each other six times in the IPL so far, with both teams winning three matches each. The contests have also been closely fought in terms of scoring, with RCB's highest total against GT being 206, and their lowest 169, while GT's best is 200 and lowest 147, underlining how little separates the two sides.

A slightly tacky Chinnaswamy pitch took away the usual firepower from the RCB batting unit in their previous match against Delhi Capitals, which they lost by six wickets. But more than just the defeat, their second of the season and first at home in IPL 2026, it was the missed opportunity to

strengthen their place in the top four that would have disappointed the team management. Now placed third on the table with eight points, RCB have Sunrisers Hyderabad (eight points), Delhi Capitals and Gujarat Titans (six points) each close behind them. Another slip-up against GT could push them into a tight spot, especially with a string of away matches coming up, including two at their "home away from home" in Raipur. As a result, RCB will be keen to give their home fans something to cheer about with a strong performance against Gujarat. However, that will depend largely on their batting unit rediscovering form and finding ways to post competitive totals even when conditions are not entirely favourable. That has been a concern in their last two matches. Although they secured a comfortable win over Lucknow Super Giants, they lost five wickets in the process. Against Delhi Capitals, the batters struggled from the outset despite opener Phil Salt scoring a mid-made 63.

IPL 2026: Chennai Super Kings bring in Akash Madhwal after Ayush Mhatre injury blow

New Delhi, Apr 23:



Dealt a blow to their campaign, five-time champions Chennai Super Kings have signed Akash Madhwal as a replacement for Ayush Mhatre, who has been ruled out of the remainder of IPL 2026 with a hamstring injury.

Madhwal joins the franchise for a fee of 30 lakh, adding depth to CSK's pace resources midway through the season. A right-arm pacer, Madhwal rose to prominence with Mumbai Indians in IPL 2023, where he delivered a standout performance, picking up 5/5 in the eliminator against Lucknow Super Giants. He had earli-

er been part of Royal Challengers Bengaluru as a net bowler in 2021. However, his returns dipped in subsequent seasons. He managed five wickets in five matches in 2024 and featured for Rajasthan Royals in the previous edition, claiming four wickets in four games.

Overall, the 32-year-old has 23 wickets from 17 IPL matches, though he went unsold in the IPL 2026 auction. Hailing from Roorkee, Madhwal has also led Uttarakhnd in domestic cricket, captaining the side in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy during the 2022-23 season.

Pakistan withdraw from SAFF women's championship 2026 amid India tensions



New Delhi, Apr 23: The long-standing political friction between India and Pakistan has once again spilled over into sport, this time affecting women's football, as Pakistan officially withdrew from the 2026 SAFF Women's Championship.

The development is another reminder of how geopolitical strain in South Asia continues to interrupt regional sporting ties beyond cricket, limiting opportunities for athletes on both sides. This year's edition will mark the second time India hosts the SAFF Women's Championship, after the 2016 tournament in Siliguri, where India lifted their fourth title. Goa, meanwhile, will stage its second SAFF event, having previously hosted the 1999 men's championship at the same venue, where India defeated Bangladesh in the final.

RR skipper Parag refuses to change style despite struggles with the bat

New Delhi, Apr 23:

Rajasthan Royals skipper Riyan Parag admitted that he is going through a difficult phase in the first half of IPL 2026, but made it clear that he will not change his natural style of play just to score safer runs.



Parag has managed 81 runs in seven innings so far, averaging 13.50, and scored 20 in the match against Lucknow Super Giants at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow on Wednesday. "Everyone has been very supportive. I've been going through a phase as well. Right before the IPL, I had gone through something, and even now I'm going through something, and everyone understands that. Everyone respects that, and I thank them for that," Parag said after Wednesday's match against

Lucknow Super Giants. "I feel the way I'm batting, (a big) innings is not too far away. But, as I've been saying, if I go in tomorrow and I play another game, it's going to be what the team needs. It's not me not scoring runs and taking my time, getting 40 off 30, that's not going to happen. I go out there, assess conditions; if they want me

to go to 200 from ball one, I do that," he added. At the time of Parag's dismissal, Rajasthan Royals were struggling at 62 for 4. They slipped further to 110 for 6 before Ravindra Jadeja steadied the innings and took them to 159 with support from the lower middle order. Despite the eventual win, Parag felt the team fell short

with the bat. "Firstly, I feel we were really short with the bat. The way the wicket was playing when me and Hetty (Shimron Hetmyer) were batting, I think we've got to be better," he said. "I thought, honestly, even with the situation we had, we were close to getting 180, and that would have been a really good score because I knew it was going to be slowing down later. But yeah, the bowlers, they did pretty well," he added. The bowlers then stepped up to defend the total, with Jofra Archer and Nandre Burger leading the effort in the powerplay. Both bowled three overs each early on and returned identical figures of 1 for 15. A crucial run-out of Ayush Badoni by substitute fielder Ravi Singh also helped shift momentum, resulting in what Parag described as an "impressive" fielding display.



'Congress CM should have spent at least a day in jail': Party leader Ajay Tharayil joins debate on the top post

New Delhi, Apr 23: Senior Congress leader Ajay Tharayil has also entered into the public debate taking place in Kerala over the Chief Ministerial post. Ajith Tharayil, in a Facebook post titled "The Congress Chief Minister of My Dreams" on Thursday, outlined specific criteria the future Congress chief minister he believes should meet, emphasizing a background in grassroots struggle and activism.

According to him, a truly deserving CM should have a history of active participation in student and youth movements. No name was specifically mentioned for the post of Chief Minister in the post. His specific requirements include that the Congress CM should have spent at least a day in jail as part of political struggle. The leader must have been hit by water from a water cannon at least once during a protest. "The leader must be a per-



son who has come through youth struggles. He must have faced police harassment and oppression during the protests. He must have spent at least one day in jail, and he must have had at least one drop of water from a water cannon fall on his clothes during the protests," Tharayil wrote in his post.

The Chief Minister of his dreams should show respect to grassroots-

level party workers and maintain consistent political stances and should speak to the hearts of the people rather than just being a "voice on social media". "He should not be a voice on social media, but one who speaks to the hearts of the people. He should be someone who treats the grassroots workers with respect. He should be consistent in his stances. My

dream is to have such a Congress Chief Minister," Tharayil wrote on Facebook.

Though no name was specifically mentioned for the post of Chief Minister in the post, Tharayil is considered a leader on the side of K C Venugopal.

Discussions about who would become the Chief Minister were active in the Congress from the day after the voting. The CM discussions were initiated by the Ernakulam district Congress President Muhammed Shias, a confidant of Opposition Leader VD. Sathesan. Shias's remark that the Chief Minister should be from Ernakulam raised suspicions among other factions in Congress.

Following this, former KPCC President K Sudhakaran MP has openly stated that he wants Ramesh Chennithala to become the Chief Minister, if the UDF comes to power.

Murshidabad to Birbhum, blood and gore unveiled as TMC-BJP fight turns violent

New Delhi, Apr 23: Violence ripped through parts of West Bengal during polling, turning the high-stakes Assembly elections into a battleground, with clashes, stone pelting and lathi charges reported from multiple districts. From Murshidabad to Birbhum, scenes of chaos and bloodshed overshadowed the voting process, raising serious concerns over law and order.

Murshidabad emerged as the epicentre of unrest, where tensions spiralled in the Nowda assembly constituency after workers of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the Aam Janata Unnayan Party (AUJP) clashed violently. Stones were hurled from both sides as police and central forces struggled to regain control. Security personnel eventually resorted to a



lathi charge to disperse the mob. "We are trying to control the situation," said Additional Superintendent of Police Majid Khan.

The violence also saw property damage, including the vandalism of a car belonging to AUJP founder Humayun Kabir. Alleging an attack, Kabir accused the ruling party of intimidation and "goondaigiri," while demanding action against police officials. The TMC denied the charges, with local leader

Sofazzaman Saikh accusing Kabir of attempting to disrupt polling with "anti-social elements." BJP polling agent suffers head injury in Labhpur violence. In a separate incident, at Booth No. 68 in Labhpur, BJP candidate Debashish Ojha's election agent Bishwajit Mandal was allegedly assaulted by TMC workers, leaving him with a head injury. The episode has added to the growing list of complaints of violence and intimidation during polling. After being allegedly attacked by TMC party workers, Bishwajit Mandal said, "I am an election agent... Few people complained to us that the entire booth is being captured... On my way back, I was attacked on the road. The booth was 100 metres away from the booth."

BJP accuses Hemant Soren of misleading voters on electoral roll revision

New Delhi, Apr 23: Jharkhand BJP president Aditya Sahu accused Chief Minister Hemant Soren of misleading voters over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging that the exercise is being politicised to protect "ineligible voters".

Sahu claimed that the Chief Minister was creating confusion among voters by suggesting that the revision process could deprive tribals, backward communities and other beneficiaries of their voting rights and welfare entitlements. He described such assertions as "misleading and baseless".

The BJP leader said the Special Intensive Revision is a routine exercise carried out by the Election Commission of India to ensure that all eli-



gible citizens are included in the electoral rolls while removing ineligible entries. He added that the process involves standard procedures such as Form 6 for inclusion of new voters, Form 7 for deletion of names and Form 8 for corrections.

Sahu further claimed that similar revisions have been conducted multiple times in the past as part of electoral reforms,

and questioned why objections were being raised now. He emphasised that the exercise is conducted independently by the Election Commission and does not involve political interference. Alleging irregularities, the BJP leader said the ruling dispensation was concerned about the identification of what he described as "fake voters".

He cited figures to claim that the growth in the number of voters in Jharkhand between 2019 and 2024 was higher than the national average, suggesting that this warranted scrutiny. Sahu also cited instances from East Singhbhum district to support his allegations, claiming discrepancies in beneficiary data and voter records.

Birbhum votes under tight security; one dead, clashes reported in Labhpur and Khoirasole

New Delhi, Apr 23: An elderly person died due to a heart attack in Birbhum while going to cast his vote as polling concluded in the politically sensitive district of West Bengal on Thursday. Birbhum has been a troublesome district on the polling day in the past, and this time was no different, as several incidents of violence were reported throughout the day.

An election agent of the BJP candidate, Debashish Ojha, in booth number 288 in the Bhranarkol gram panchayat area in Labhpur assembly seat, Biswajit Mondal, suffered a serious head injury during clashes. Later, police rescued him and a report was sought by



the ECI later in the day. He was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment. "The TMC supporters have beaten me with rods and lathis," he alleged. His car was also vandalized.

In the Khoirasole Block of Dubrajpur assembly in booth number 65 in

Budhpur village, locals alleged that the EVM machine was defunct for a long time, and agitated TMC supporters beat the police and central forces on duty by hurling stones and bricks. Two to four state police and CAPF jawans were injured.

The incident prompted police personnel to bring out their weapons and threaten to open fire at the mob if they came forward. Voting was stopped in this booth for a brief period. Later, more central forces arrived, and polling was resumed.

Forty-three TMC leaders of Birbhum district were under observation of police today, though the name of Anubrata Mondal was not in this list. Kesto Mondal went to cast his vote with daughter, Sukanya Mondal, in Bolpur and remained inside the Bolpur TMC party office throughout the day.

In Veramari village in Ilambazar booth number 145, a man tried to enter

the polling booth and snatch the EVM machine, but was denied by the forces there. Central forces overpowered him and handed him over to the Ilambazar Police. Local TMC leader Hafizul Sheikh has alleged that the central forces threatened the ordinary voters and complained about the excessive strictness applied at the booth.

In Labhpur, there were also some reports of clashes between the TMC and the BJP in a few booths. Jagadish Chakrapadhyay, the BJP candidate of Sunti, has thanked the people for casting their votes and said that central forces had done their duty in this election.

Haryana unveils ambitious Industrial Policy to position state as global ESDM and AVGC-XR hub

Karnal, Apr 23: Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini led Haryana government is moving rapidly towards establishing the state as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM), IT, Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comics sectors.

The government is formulating an industrial policy that will not only be highly attractive to investors in these emerging sectors but will also accelerate large-scale employment generation, innovation and cutting-edge technological development.

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, while interacting with industry leaders in New Delhi on Thursday regarding the upcoming Industrial Policy, said that the IT, Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and ESDM sectors are emerging as key pillars of the national economy.

Haryana, with its robust infrastruc-



ture, strong connectivity, and industry-friendly environment, holds immense potential to attract global investments in these sectors. Industries and Commerce Minister Rao Narbir Singh was also present during the meeting.

He stated that the government aims to position Haryana as a preferred destination for global companies,

where leading domestic and international firms can invest. The new Industrial Policy will offer special incentives to ESDM companies, including capital subsidies, tax benefits, skill development support, and ease-of-doing-business provisions to ensure the smooth establishment and expansion of industries. Industry representatives

suggested identifying futuristic products and selecting companies to support them in becoming global players, which would also benefit associated MSMEs. They further emphasised promoting research and development for startups and establishing Centres of Excellence to boost innovation. To address export-related challenges, representatives recommended setting up global warehouses abroad to facilitate product storage for companies. Several firms also expressed interest in adopting ITIs to ensure the availability of a skilled workforce tailored to industry needs. Sandeep Arora from Microsoft discussed promoting Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based education in schools, ITIs, and other educational institutions to equip youth with future-ready skills. Under this initiative, students will be trained in AI, machine learning.

Tejashwi's 'Samrat' jibe triggers political row in Bihar

Lucknow, Apr 23: Since the formation of the new government in Bihar, Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav has been aggressively targeting the ruling side through a series of social media posts.

In his latest tweet, Tejashwi wrote, "When the crown is on the head... criminals have become Samrat." In another tweet on Wednesday, the RJD leader said, "Corruption in the NDA government has become so enormous that the corrupt themselves have become the 'samrat' (emperor)." These remarks are being seen as a direct attack on Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, triggering sharp political reactions.

Continuing his attack on Thursday, Tejashwi posted a video clip on X, claiming that "there is jungle raj in Bihar and women are not safe anywhere in the state."

He further wrote, "At Sitaram Chowk in Sitamarhi, two miscreants snatched a gold chain from a woman in broad daylight and fled, exposing the tall claims of law and order made by NDA leaders." Sharing another video clip, the RJD leader said, "This is not a scene from a film, but an incident from the Mahnar police station



area of Vaishali district in Bihar, where around 30 criminals entered a village, firing shots and hurling bombs. They assaulted people and looted a gold trader's house, escaping with jewellery and cash worth lakhs." During the incident, the police were informed, but they reached the spot an hour later. By then, the criminals had fled. There is fear among the people in the area. Incidents of murder, loot and crime are occurring in Bihar every day," he added. "Sometimes, criminals enter shops and hold guns to people's temples; at other times, they publicly slit someone's throat. For 21 years, criminals have received such protection from those in power that today they have become 'samrat' in Bihar."

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No prosecution witness examined in last 35 years, SC stays trial proceedings against UP police officer



New Delhi, Apr 23: The Supreme Court has stayed proceedings against a Uttar Pradesh police officer — accused of rioting, causing hurt and breach of peace — noting that not a single prosecution witness has been examined in the last 35 years in the case registered way back in 1989 at Prayagraj. Issuing notice to the Uttar Pradesh government and staying further proceedings, the Bench of Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice Vijay Bhishoi on Monday,



April 20, said, "In the facts and circumstances of this case and more particularly, having regard to the fact that almost 35 years have lapsed, we are inclined to quash the proceedings on this ground alone."

However, the Court chose to hear the Uttar Pradesh government before passing any final order. "However, before proceeding further to pass any order, we would like to hear the State(s)," the Court said, issuing notice and posting the matter for further hearing on April 29, 2026. The Court also impleaded the State of Uttarakhnad through its Principal Secretary, Home Department, as a respondent. The Court also noted that there were five accused in the case. Two of them passed away during the course of the proceedings, while two others were acquitted as no prosecution witness was produced against them for the recording of oral evidence. "We are informed that in all, five accused came to be charge-sheeted, including the present petitioner. Out of five, two co-accused passed away and the other two co-accused have already been acquitted on the ground that the prosecution failed to produce any of the prosecution witnesses for the purpose of recording of oral evidence," the Court noted in its order.

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Sule slams Fadnavis govt for failure to register FIR in Ajit Pawar crash case

Mumbai, Apr 23: Sharad Pawar-led NCP's National Working President and Lok Sabha MP Supriya Sule criticized the Fadnavis government for failing to register an FIR and investigate the Ajit Pawar air crash.

After casting her vote in Baramati on Thursday, Sule called it unfortunate that no FIR was filed in a case involving the death of a deputy chief minister. "An FIR was registered in neighbouring Karnataka state by the Congress government due to the efforts of Rohit Pawar, but his FIR should have been registered in Maharashtra much before. This Baramati byelection is taking place, in less than three months of Ajit Pawar's death," she said. Rohit Pawar had lodged the "Zero" FIR in March under Section



173(1) of the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita. The complaint was later sent to the Baramati Taluka police station in Pune district, which has since forwarded it to the CID. A Zero FIR is a first information report (FIR) registered

at any police station, regardless of whether the crime was committed within its jurisdiction. Rohit Pawar had claimed that he had to lodge the "Zero FIR" in Karnataka as the police in Maharashtra did not register a case on his com-

plaint regarding the Baramati air crash. A Pune Rural Police officer confirmed that the Baramati Taluka police station had received the Zero FIR from the Bengaluru police and referred it to the CID. Significantly, Supriya Sule's statement came a couple of days after Deputy CM Sunetra Pawar said while campaigning, "Like many people, I also have doubts about the circumstances surrounding Ajit Pawar's death. All these questions must be answered. For this, I took the lead and met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, who gave clear instructions for a thorough investigation. The truth should be out in this. The guilty should be severely punished. The Chief Minister has also given instructions to take action in this. There will be no compromise on this. The Centre and the state are helping, there should be no worries in this. Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar said.

India's rice exports decline by 7.5% to \$11.53 billion due to West Asia crisis

New Delhi, Apr 23: Amid the ongoing West Asia crisis, leading to global supply disruption, India's rice exports dipped 7.5 per cent to \$11.53 billion in 2025-26. The dip is primarily led by the contraction in shipments to major destinations including the middle east countries. As per the commerce ministry data, the exports in March declined 15.36 per cent to \$997.53 million. Shipments to Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman have been impacted due to the war between US-Israel and Iran. Notably, Iran is India's top basmati rice export destination. The shipments are witnessing growing stress on order flows, payment cycles, and ship schedules due to the prevailing instability. India is one of the world's



largest producers and exporters of rice producing around 150 million tonnes of rice in 2024-25 from nearly 47 million hectares, accounting for about 28 per cent of global output. In 2024-25, India exported 20.1 million tonnes of rice valued at \$12.5 billion, reaching more than 172 countries. Average yields have improved from 2.72 tonnes per hectare in 2014-15 to about 3.2 tonnes per hectare in 2024-25, driven by improved seed varieties,

better agronomic practices, and expanded irrigation coverage. As per reports, importers have conveyed their inability to honour existing commitments and remit payments to India, creating uncertainty for exporters. In terms of overall exports, India exported goods worth \$62.4 billion to economies linked to the Strait of Hormuz in 2024. Of this, only around \$5.3 billion, or less than 10 per cent, may face significant challenges in being redirected elsewhere. Recently, India has allowed exports of basmati and non-basmati rice to some European countries without the mandatory certificate of inspection by its export inspection agency for six months.

Sensex drops over 850 pts amid surge in crude oil prices

Mumbai, Apr 23: The Indian stock market declined on Thursday, tracking a surge in crude oil prices, foreign fund outflows and weak cues from Asian markets. At the close, the Sensex settled 852.49 points, or 1.09 per cent, lower at 77,664, while the broader Nifty declined 205.05 points, or 0.84 per cent, to 24,173.05. The Nifty Smallcap100 and Nifty Midcap100 indices traded flat. The cumulative market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms dropped to slightly above Rs 466 lakh crore from more than Rs 469 lakh crore. Among the sectors, 12 of the 16 major sectoral indices were in the red. Auto stocks declined 1.3 per cent and were among the top losers. Financial heavyweights also slipped 0.8 per cent. Pharma stocks rose 2.3 per cent on growth expectations. Nifty PSU



Bank index crashed 2.19%, while the Private Bank index dropped 1.31%. The Nifty Bank index suffered a loss of 1.43%, and the Financial Services index declined 1.42%. ICICI Bank fell 1.6 per cent, and HDFC Bank was down 0.8 per cent. The Indian rupee extended its losses for the fourth consecutive session, slipping 34 paise to 94.12 against the US dollar. On the Nifty, the top losers were Trent, M&M, Shriram Finance, SBI Life Insurance, and Tech Mahindra. Gainers included Dr Reddy's Labs, Cipla, Jio Financial, Adani Enterprises, and Apollo Hospitals. Around 140 stocks touched their 52-week highs on the BSE. These included GE Vernova TD, Welspun Corp, Glenmark Pharma, Dana Patterns, Hitachi Energy, Himadri Speciality Chemical, Lupin, Torrent Power, Chennai Petroleum Corporation, Schneider Infra, Granules India, NALCO, Aurubindo Pharma, Adani Green Energy, Tinkon.

Second-round effects of supply shocks need close watch amid West Asia conflict: RBI Bulletin

New Delhi, Apr 23: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cautioned that possible second-round effects, where supply shocks could transform into demand-side pressures, require careful and continuous assessment amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, according to the April edition of its bulletin. The bulletin noted that while the ceasefire between the United States and Iran has provided some breather to the global economy, the overall macroeconomic environment remains uncertain due to persistent geopolitical tensions. It highlighted that the global macroeconomic milieu has undergone a significant shift, driven by supply chain disruptions and rising energy costs linked to the West Asia crisis. Increased volatility in commodity prices and financial markets has further added to the uncertainty. It stated, "Possible second round effects with the supply shock transforming itself into a demand shock warrant careful and continuous assessment". The RBI's reference to "second-round effects" means that the initial impact of



supply-side disruptions, such as higher energy costs and supply chain issues due to the West Asia conflict, could gradually spread into the broader economy and affect demand conditions as well. For instance, rising input and fuel costs can push up overall prices, which may then influence consumer spending and business activity. This transition from a supply shock to wider economic pressures, RBI said, requires careful and continuous monitoring, as it can increase risks to both inflation and growth if the situation persists and supply chains are not restored in time.

Amazon to invest over Rs 2,800 crore to expand logistics networks, improve workers' safety

New Delhi, Apr 23: Amazon India is set to invest over Rs 2,800 crore (\$300 million) to expand its logistics networks and improve workers' safety and well-being as part of its plans to invest more than \$35 billion by 2030 on AI-led digitisation, exports and jobs. The announcement builds on its Rs 2,000 crore investment in 2025 which enabled the launch of 17 new fulfilment centres, six sortation centres, and 75 last-mile delivery stations across India. Amazon has also introduced its quick commerce offering, Amazon Now, which has expanded to more than 300 micro-fulfilment centres across key



cities. As per the announcement, Amazon India will expand and upgrade its India operations network, including fulfilment centres, sortation hubs and delivery stations, to increase capacity and improve delivery speeds, especially in Tier-II and III cities. It will also support sellers

and small businesses, while contributing to local economic activity. The company plans to expand Amazon Now, both within existing cities and into new ones, offering delivery timelines ranging from minutes to days. Additional measures include rest areas, improved access to drinking water, spot cooling systems and enhanced accessibility features for workers with disabilities. The company is also deploying artificial intelligence (AI) and machine-learning tools to improve operational efficiency and safety. These include alerts for unsafe driving, prompts for rest breaks, and AI-led route planning to balance workloads. Enhancements to the driver app will focus on navigation in complex addresses, clearer earnings visibility and simpler workflows.

India's private sector activity picks up in April; Composite PMI rises to 58.3

New Delhi, Apr 23: India's private sector activity gathered momentum at the start of the new financial year, with the HSBC Flash India Composite PMI Output Index rising to 58.3 in April from 57.0 in March, according to data compiled by S&P Global. The latest reading signalled a sharp expansion in overall business activity and remained well above the long-run average, indicating sustained economic resilience. The rebound follows a moderation in March, when growth was impacted by disruptions linked to the ongoing West Asia conflict. The uptick in April was largely driven by the manufacturing sector, which recorded stronger gains in both output and new orders compared to services. The flash manufacturing PMI climbed to 55.9 in April from 53.9 in March,



reflecting improved demand conditions and increased production. The services sector also continued to expand, albeit at a relatively slower pace. The services PMI stood at 57.9, marginally higher than 57.5 in the previous month. A PMI reading above 50 indicates expansion in activity, while a print below 50 signals contraction. The acceleration in business activity was supported by a combination of factors, including better demand conditions, rising inflows of new work, capacity expansion and higher investments in technology. Firms reported stronger growth in new orders, suggesting that demand momentum remained intact despite global uncertainties. Employment across the private sector rose at the fastest pace in ten

months, as companies ramped up hiring to meet increasing business requirements and support expansion plans. The hiring push also reflected positive business sentiment, with firms expressing optimism about output growth over the next 12 months. This confidence was underpinned by ongoing marketing efforts, a pipeline of pending project approvals and rising client enquiries. However, overall sentiment eased slightly from March levels, even as it remained the second-highest in nearly 18 months. Despite the growth momentum, companies continued to face elevated input cost pressures in April. Firms reported higher expenses on fuel, gas, oil and a range of raw materials, including chemicals, food items, jute, leather, metals and rubber.

India 'tough nut to crack', says USTR Greer as negotiators conclude trade talks

New Delhi, Apr 23: As the delegation from New Delhi concluded talks on the bilateral trade agreement with Washington, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said that India was a "tough nut to crack" in Washington. The US team, led by Assistant USTR for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch, met with the 12-member delegation, headed by Darpan Jain, Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce, to discuss the specifics of the trade agreement. "India is a tough nut to crack... they've protected their agricultural markets for a very long time," Greer told the Committee on Ways and Means of the US Congress. "As part of this



deal, they want to protect a lot of that. There are things, though, where I think we can find mutual agreement. DDGs (dissillers dried grains) is a good example of this," he added. Greer was answering questions from senators regarding the exports of DDGs, which are used to manufacture ethanol, soybean meal, and high-protein animal feed. According to the USTR, the US negotiators were talking with their Indian counterparts on certain topics like the DDGs. "Indian trade negotiators are in town this week. So we've been talking this week about these issues, including these specific commodities you talked about, DDGs," Greer said.

Ferozpur chilli farmers make maiden export under ODOP push



New Delhi, Apr 23: From the borderland of Ferozpur to international trading hubs in Dubai, the green chillies produced by a group of local farmers have hit the global market for the first time, redefining the farm economy in the state. In this regard, the first consignment of 15 metric tonnes of green chilli was recently flagged off by Punjab Vidhan Sabha Speaker Kuldip Singh Sandhu, marking a much needed shift towards high value sustainable farming in the region. While talking to The Tribune, DC Deepshikha

Sharma said that Ferozpur's entry into export market was an outcome of a sequenced institution-led export framework where policy alignment, field validation and market linkage were built step by step, culminating in sending the first consignment to Dubai two days ago. "The process was anchored by District Level Export Promotion Committee (DLEPC), which convened focused meetings with Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) to formally position chilli as a priority export product for Ferozpur earlier identified under the One District One Product (ODOP) programme. "This adoption served as policy trigger that aligned various departments around export readiness covering quality standards, aggregation protocols, logistic planning and market access" said Sharma, adding that the effort led to tie-ups with exporters for assured off-take, price discovery, and compliance with international specifications.

Oil retailers losing Rs 20 on petrol, Rs 100 on diesel; but no plans to raise prices: Govt

New Delhi, Apr 23: State-owned fuel retailers are incurring losses of about Rs 20 per litre on petrol and roughly Rs 100 per litre on diesel as pump prices remain frozen for nearly four years despite a surge in global oil prices, the government said on Thursday, signalling there is no immediate plan to raise retail fuel rates. Dismissing reports of a potential Rs 25-28 per litre increase in petrol and diesel prices after Assembly elections, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) said in a post on X that "there is no such proposal under consideration by the government". At a news briefing on developments in West Asia, Sujata



Sharma, Joint Secretary in MoPNG, said international prices of crude oil (raw material used to make fuel like petrol and diesel) and LPG rates have been very volatile, yet the government has not increased prices. Crude, which was \$70 per barrel last year, aver-

aged over \$113 this month, she said. "There is a huge increase... in spite of that the government has not increased prices and the effort of the government has been to keep the prices stable." Retail petrol and diesel prices have remained frozen since early April 2022 — a period during which oil prices rose in some months and fell in other times. When prices fell, state-owned oil firms made handsome profits, which they used to set off losses when rates rose. Sharma said despite the increase in oil prices after war in West Asia, the government has not increased retail pump rates. "The effort of the government has been to keep the price stable."

BJP gears up for District training camps after successful Mandal training camps

Sat Sharma, Ashok Koul, Dr Manyal address planning meet for BJP's District training camps

Jammu, April 23: Sat Sharma, President, J&K BJP and MP (Rajya Sabha), along with BJP J&K General Secretary (Organization) Ashok Koul, and BJP Abhiyan Prabhari for Northern Zone and MLA Dr. Devender Manyal, addressed over a review and planning meeting of the district level training camps under the 'Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Prashikshan Mahabhiyan 2026' at the party headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

BJP J&K General Secretaries Sanjita Dogra, Baldev Singh Billaawara, and Gopal Mahajan, and Abhiyan Convener Pameesh Mahajan were also present during the meeting. District Prabharis, District Presidents, District Seh-Prabharis, and District Abhiyan Conveners, and Co-conveners participated in the meeting.



The meeting witnessed detailed deliberations on the framework of the Abhiyan, organizational strengthening, and the roadmap for upcoming district-level training camps under the second phase of the Prashikshan Mahabhiyan. It was highlighted that the first phase of the Abhiyan witnessed the successful conduct of Mandal-level training camps across the Union Territory, laying a strong foundation for the next phase.

Sat Sharma, while addressing the meeting, emphasized that the core vision of the training initiative is to develop well-trained, ideologically sound, and mature leaders capable of serving the nation, Jammu & Kashmir, and society effectively. He stressed the importance of blending the experience of senior leaders with the enthusiasm and energy of the youth cadre to build

a study and dynamic organization. He also called for ensuring a plastic-free environment in all training camps and reiterated BJP's commitment to sustainable practices. He asserted that BJP remains dedicated to strengthening grassroots democracy and empowering every section of society, while criticizing opposition parties for lacking ideological clarity and commitment to nation-building. Ashok Koul conducted a detailed review of the Mandal-level training camps through reports from Prabharis, Presidents, and Abhiyan Conveners of District. He called for maximum participation of both senior and youth cadre in the upcoming district-level training camps and stressed the importance of consistent attendance, engagement and organizational discipline to further strengthen the party at the grassroots level.

Indian Army celebrated International mother earth day

Poonch, Apr 23:

The Indian Army reaffirming its commitment to environmental conservation and community outreach, organized a meaningful celebration of International Mother Earth Day at Govt High School, Haribudha. The event saw enthusiastic participation from students, teachers and Army personnel, aimed at spreading awareness about the importance of protecting the environment and promoting sustainable practices.

This initiative is part of the Indian Army's ongoing efforts to strengthen civil-military relations and contribute to nation-building through educational and social outreach programs. The program commenced with an address by Army officials, highlighting the



significance of Earth Day and the urgent need to preserve natural resources. Students were sensitized to key environmental issues such as climate change, pollution control, waste management and the importance of afforestation. A series of activities, including awareness lectures and interactive sessions were conducted during the event. The school authorities expressed their gratitude to the Indian Army for organizing such

an impactful event and inspiring young minds to become responsible citizens. The event concluded with a pledge from all participants to protect the environment and contribute to a sustainable future. Through such initiatives, the Indian Army continues to play a vital role not only in safeguarding the nation but also in fostering social responsibility and environmental consciousness among the youth.

Nasha Mukht J&K Abhiyan

Awareness programme held at SDH Bhadrawah



BHADRAWAH, APRIL 23: As part of the ongoing 100 Day Nasha Mukht Jammu & Kashmir Abhiyan, an awareness programme on perils of drug abuse was conducted today at Sub District

Hospital Bhadrawah. The programme was organized under the guidance of Chief Medical Officer Dr Tanveer Ahmed Rather and overall supervision of BMO Dr. Versha Sharma. The event witnessed active

participation from the hospital staff, officials from health sub-centres and ASHAs working across the block. Dr. Versha Sharma delivered an informative lecture highlighting the harmful effects of drug abuse on individuals, families and society at large. She emphasized the importance of community awareness, early intervention and the collective responsibility of healthcare workers in combating substance abuse. The session aimed to sensitize frontline health workers about their crucial role in spreading awareness and identifying vulnerable individuals within the community.

HADP: DC Reasi stresses maximum coverage, effective implementation across targeted sectors

REASI, APRIL 23: District Development Commissioner Reasi Kumar Abhishek chaired a meeting today to review the implementation status of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) in the district. He conducted a comprehensive review of the progress achieved under various components of the programme and assessed its implementation across different sectors. Emphasizing timely execution, the DDC directed the concerned officers to ensure effective ground-level implementation so



that the intended benefits reach farmers without delay. Detailed discussions were held on the physical and financial progress, targets achieved and the chal-

lenges being faced in the execution of the programme. The DDC stressed the need for close monitoring and better coordination among departments to overcome bottle-

necks and ensure smooth implementation of HADP across the district. Reviewing farmers' coverage, the DDC directed the concerned officers to ensure 100 percent regis-

tration to benefit all eligible beneficiaries. He also reviewed the status of registered licenses for seeds, fertilizers and pesticides in the district and instructed the concerned departments to ensure proper regulation and availability of quality inputs to farmers. Furthermore, he directed the concerned department to ensure proper scrutiny of the newly established District Level Committee infrastructure and related assets. The meeting was attended by CPO Narinder Kumar, officers from Sheep Husbandry and allied departments.

Commendable Initiative for the Promotion of Devavani Sanskrit: Sanskrit Nameplate Installed at the Residence of BJP State Treasurer Prabhat Singh Jamwal

Jammu, Apr 23: In a significant and inspiring step towards the promotion of Devavani Sanskrit in Jammu and Kashmir, a Sanskrit nameplate was installed at the residence of BJP State Treasurer Prabhat Singh Jamwal. The initiative was carried out by members of the Shri Kailakh Jyotish avim Vedic Sansthan, who have been actively working for the preservation and promotion of Indian culture, traditions, and the Sanskrit language. The event was attended by scholars, social activists, and distinguished citizens. Members of the institution installed the nameplate in accordance with Vedic rituals and highlighted the importance of the Sanskrit language, reaffirming their commitment to its wider promotion. Addressing the gathering, Prabhat Singh Jamwal stated that Sanskrit



is not merely a language but the foundation of Indian culture, knowledge, and spiritual tradition.

He appreciated the efforts of the Shri Kailakh Jyotish avim Vedic Sansthan and its President Mahant

Rohit, stating that such initiatives are essential for the promotion of Sanskrit in the region. He further said that in the present times, social awareness and innovative efforts are crucial to bringing Sanskrit closer to the masses. Such initiatives not only help in reviving the language but also connect the younger generation with India's rich cultural heritage. Representatives of the institution stated that their objective is to take Sanskrit to every household and spread awareness about its relevance in society. They also mentioned that the campaign will be expanded further in the future to ensure greater participation in the preservation of Indian culture. Members of the trust, including Pramod Sharma, M.L. Verma, and others, were also present on the occasion.

DC Kathua inaugurates 3-day training programme for Field Trainers

Lays stress on professionalism, diligence in field surveys

KATHUA, APRIL 23: Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma who is also the Principal Census Officer, today inaugurated a three-day training programme for Field Trainers for Census 2027 Phase-I (House Listing & Housing Census) here in the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex. In his inaugural address, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the significance of the Census as a vital tool for evidence-based planning and governance. He urged the participants to approach the training with utmost seriousness and dedication to ensure accuracy, reliability and timeliness in the con-



duct of census operations. The training sessions are being conducted by District Statistics & Evaluation Officer (DSEO) Sidharth Anand and Master Trainer from Directorate of Census Operations- J&K Sanjay Kumar. The sessions would cover key aspects of census methodology, digital data collection and

field-level execution. The programme is being attended by designated Field Trainers from the Education Department, who will further impart training at the grassroots level. Additional Deputy Commissioners of Billawar and Basohli, besides Sub-Divisional Magistrates of Hiranagar and Bani.

ABVP Submits Memorandum to Vice-Chancellor Highlighting Key Student Issues at CUJ

Jammu, Apr 23: Central University of Jammu unit of the AkhilBharatiyaVidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) submitted a detailed memorandum to the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Jammu, raising several pressing issues concerning student welfare and campus infrastructure. ABVP Unit President Abhishek Choudhary highlighted the key issues affecting students and urged the university administration to take immediate and time-bound action. He emphasized that the availability of basic facilities and efficient campus services is essential for ensuring a conducive academic environment. The major demands put forward by ABVP included increasing the number of e-carts within the campus to



facilitate smooth mobility, allowing and increasing the entry of private buses to reduce transportation difficulties, and the immediate removal of the speed breaker near the main gate, which is causing inconvenience and damage to vehicles. The organization also demanded the installation of water coolers along internal road areas for the convenience of students. In addition, ABVP called for the installation of a 100-meter national flag

and a statue of Swami Vivekananda within the university campus. The organization also raised the issue of timely????? of the university convocation, which remains a matter of concern for students. ABVP further demanded that the university administration provide a clear and definite timeline for the resolution of these issues, stating that any delay directly impacts the academic and daily life of students.

Central University Jammu Organised Certification Event for Educational Content Developers

Jammu, 23 April 2026: With the vision of Honourable Vice Chancellor, Prof. Sanjeev Jain, the Department of Educational Studies, Central University of Jammu, successfully organized a Two Week Training Workshop on MOOC Development. The day remarked a special certification event to facilitate M.Ed. students who have participated in hands-on-practice workshop on MOOC designing and development. The event was organized and coordinated by the students of M.Ed 4th Semester with the objective of celebrating learning, innovation and academic achievement. The program emphasized the significant role of technology and innovation in enhancing the teaching-learning process. On this occasion, Prof. Asit K. Mantry, Head of the Department and the Workshop Coordinator, Prof. J. N. Balia, Professor, Department of Educational Studies, Central University of Jammu and Research



Scholars as resource experts of the workshop graced the event with their esteemed presence. The theme of the event, "Innovate to Educate," highlighted the evolving nature of education in the digital era. The event marked the culmination of a two-week intensive workshop aimed at designing innovative instructional modules, developing learner-centered teaching materials, and facilitating the effective distribution and disse-

mination of these pedagogical resources. The outcomes of the workshop were effectively showcased by the students through a documentary video presentation and report submission, which highlighted the entire process from conceptualization to execution along with key learning experiences and innovative practices adopted during the workshop. Additionally, instructional modules were presented during the

event to provide a practical insight into the design, structure, and implementation of the developed learning resources. During Interaction with young and innovative prospective teacher educators, Prof. Asit K. Mantry, Head of the Department in his address, highlighted the achievements and transformative changes under the guidance and supervision of Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Prof. Sanjeev Jain. He emphasized that the university provides meaningful opportunities for students to explore their potential and contribute creatively to the field of education. Referring to the vision of "Viksit Bharat 2047," he encouraged students to work towards making India a "Vishva Guru" through knowledge, innovation and dedication. He also motivated the students to strive for excellence, adopt innovative practices and actively contribute to the transformation of the education system.

LG attends foundation day of Sarv Shakti Chandi Mata Mandir, Dhammi, Nagrota

Sinha paid obeisance at the holy temple; prayed for peace, prosperity and well-being of all

JAMMU, APRIL 23: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today attended the foundation day of Sarv Shakti Chandi Mata Mandir, at Dhammi, Nagrota.

The Lieutenant Governor paid obeisance at the holy temple and prayed for peace, prosperity and well-being of all.

The religious proceedings were marked by the lighting of the Akhand Jyot and the traditional reciting of Ved Path.

During his visit, the Lieutenant Governor also reviewed the ongoing construction works of Yatri Halls, being developed by the Temple Committee, to facilitate the devotees travelling to the Shri Amarnath Ji and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. He assured all the necessary support and assistance from the admin-



istration. Shri Sanjay Gandotra, President, Sarv Shakti Chandi Mata Mandir, and temple committee members including Dr DS Jamwal, Shri Vikas Singh Jamwal, Shri Praveen Singh, Shri Balwan Singh were present. Ms Devyani Rana, Member of Legislative Assembly from Nagrota; Dr Nirmal Singh, former Deputy Chief Minister; Ms. Purnima Sharma, former Deputy Mayor, JMC, senior officials and devotees in large number also attended the foundation day ceremony.

Several public delegations, JCC call on CM Omar development & Industry related issues highlighted

JAMMU, APRIL 23: Several public and trade deputations today called on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah here, presenting a wide spectrum of developmental and industry-related matters, while seeking continued policy support and facilitation.

A deputation led by President Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Arun Gupta, engaged with the Chief Minister on key issues concerning trade and commerce. The delegation highlighted matters impacting business activity and emphasized the need for a more conducive environment to further boost economic growth and streamline operations.

The industry delegation also expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister for



restoring the Darbar Move, noting that the session has significantly invigorated economic activity in the region, particularly across markets, rental properties, hotels and the transport sector.

Another deputation, the Pir Panjal Welfare and Development Trust, led by Vivek Verma, called on the Chief Minister. The delegation brought forth a range of developmental priorities, reflecting the aspira-

tions of the region's residents. The members underscored the immense tourism potential of Pir Panjal region and called for focused efforts to harness it sustainably. They also

highlighted the importance of strengthening health and education infrastructure, ensuring reliable drinking water supply, and expanding employment opportunities, particularly for youth in border areas. Issues pertaining to the construction of community and individual bunkers, as well as further strengthening of the administrative framework in these areas, were also brought to the fore. The Chief Minister gave a patient and attentive hearing to all the deputations and individuals. He assured them that their genuine concerns would be addressed on priority, reaffirming the government's commitment to inclusive development and responsive governance across all regions.

Languages not only means of expression but guardians of our history, identity and culture: Sakeena Ito

Delivers Keynote Address on 'Relation of Urdu with Regional Languages' at Jammu University

JAMMU, APRIL 23: Minister for Education, Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Ito today remarked that languages are not merely a means of expressing thoughts but they are the guardians of our history, identity and culture.

The Minister stated this while delivering the Keynote address during One-day Seminar on 'Relation of Urdu with Regional Languages' at University of Jammu here. The seminar was organised by Department of Urdu, University of Jammu in collaboration with National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL). In her address the Minister said that this seminar is not



just a formal event, but a reflection of our identity, as languages are not merely a means of expressing thoughts, they are the guardians of our history, identity, and culture. "Urdu is a language that has evolved through centuries and has absorbed the influences of various civilizations and cultures. Lucknow and Delhi are considered the birthplaces of Urdu but Jammu and

Kashmir has equally nurtured this unique language", she stated. The Minister highlighted that the Urdu's bond with local languages like Kashmiri, Dogri, Gujri, Pahari, Bhadarwahi, Kishwari, isn't just neighbourly, but a deep linguistic relationship. "Urdu adopted words, idioms and tone from local languages and in return gave them a wider plat-

form. J&K is a land where Urdu not only got official patronage, but Sufis, Rishis, Sanskrit and Persian scholars played a key role in taking it to the masses", she said. Sakeena Ito further said that Urdu acts as a bridge connecting different communities here and helps reach each other's hearts. "Urdu language is the silken thread that unites our colourful cul-

ture", she said. Reaffirming the government's commitment, Sakeena Ito stated that sustained efforts are being made to promote and preserve regional languages, including Kashmiri, Dogri, Gujri, Pahari, and others. She stressed the importance of inclusive policies that encourage multilingual education and safeguard linguistic identities. She also assured the NCPUL and Urdu Department of Jammu University that Government is firm in its resolve for promotion of Urdu language as well as regional languages. The Minister also underscored the need for academic research and community participation.

SWD Srinagar organizes Awareness Program on various Women Centric, Social Security Schemes

SRINAGAR, APRIL 23: Social Welfare Department (SWD) Srinagar, conducted an awareness programme today, at Government Polytechnic College for Women, Bemina, with the objective of sensitizing students and faculty members about a wide range of women-centric schemes, social security initiatives, and financial assistance programmes being implemented by various line departments. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, faculty, and officials from SANKALP-HEW Srinagar. It aimed to disseminate comprehensive information about government-sponsored welfare

schemes designed to empower women, strengthen social protection mechanisms, and extend financial support to vulnerable sections of society. During the session, officials elaborated on several key initiatives focused on women's empowerment, including programmes related to education, livelihood generation, healthcare support, and rehabilitation services. Detailed insights were also provided on social security measures such as pension schemes for widows, senior citizens, and specially-abled individuals, along with financial assistance programmes for economically weaker sections.

SDRF Battalion Headquarters Jammu organises "Drug-Free India" Pledge

JAMMU, APRIL 23: A pledge for a "Drug-Free India" programme was held today at SDRF Battalion Headquarters, Jammu. DIG CD & SDRF, Jammu Anita Sharma chaired the session in presence of Commandant SDRF 2nd Bn Mohammad Aslam, officers and officials of the BN Hqrs. All SDRF personnel, CD Wardens and volunteers took solemn pledge to aware and educate the public about the disastrous consequences of drugs and



how to avoid it. They reaffirmed their commitment to combat drug abuse and promote a healthy, drug-free society. On the occasion, the Commandant SDRF, expressed gratitude.

Libraries Deptt organises events to rediscover magic of books, showcases rare collection of literary resources

SRINAGAR, APRIL 23: A series of events were organized by the Department of Libraries & Research today across Kashmir division to commemorate the World Book & Copyright Day-2026. World Book and Copyright

Day is celebrated on April 23 every year to promote the love for reading and writing, power of publishing, making reading accessible for all and the importance of protecting intellectual property through copyright laws. The Day also

signifies the potential of books and literature in shaping minds, uniting people, and inspiring social transformation. Proclaimed by UNESCO in 1995, the day commemorates the passing away of literary legends including William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, all of whom passed away on this day.

This year's theme for World Book and Copyright Day is "Literacy through multilingualism access to books for all". To mark the day, today's main event was organized at SPS Central Library complex with an Exhibition of Special Literary Collections including Manuscripts, Rare Books and Miniature Paintings. The exhibition was opened to public by Mrs Rubina Kousar, Director General, Libraries & Research, J&K. The main attractions of the exhibition, jointly organized by SPS Library Srinagar & the Oriental Research Library (ORL) Srinagar, were the historic manuscripts like Qarabai-Din, Sadh PandLugman and Shahnama Firdous.



Some of the rare books including Mahabharata & Ramayana, Rajtarangini by Kalhana, Tareekh-e-Rashedi, Gazetteer of India and Kashmir a history of Kashmir were also displayed at the exhibition. Speaking on the occasion, Director General Libraries & Research, J&K said the Oriental Research Library, Srinagar established in 1904, is a repository of around 6000 rare manuscripts in 17 languages encompassing varied fields. The library also has around 500 rare books and miniature paintings. Mrs Rubina said the manuscript collection of ORL is a treasure-trove of religious, philosophical, historical, literary and scientific writings rich in classical languages like Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, Turki, Brij Bhasha and Arabic. These languages have left deep impression

on Kashmiri language by conditioning its growth in terms of forms and scope, she said and added that the Sanskrit language of court and culture in 9th and beginning of 10th century in Kashmir contributes number of religious, aesthetic and poetic articulations and are preserved in ORL Srinagar. She said such exhibitions make our young generation aware about the culture, traditions, heritage and history of Jammu and Kashmir. A large number of people from different walks of life visited the exhibition and evinced keen interest in the rare literary resources. Book exhibitions and other activities including literary tours of libraries to re-discover the magic of books and re-inculcate reading habits among the youth were organised in District and Tehsil Libraries across Kashmir.

Chief Justice flags off Multi Utility Vehicles for strengthening legal aid outreach across J&K

JAMMU, APRIL 23: In a significant step towards strengthening access to justice and expanding outreach of legal services to the grassroots level, Justice Arun Palli, Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and Patron-in-Chief, J&K Legal Services Authority in the august presence of Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority and other Companion Judges of the High Court at Jammu today flagged off a fleet of Multi Utility Vehicles for District Legal Services Authorities of the Jammu Province, at High Court Complex, Janipur, Jammu. These vehicles have been procured under the guidance of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) with the objective of strengthening the delivery of legal aid and welfare services, particularly in far-flung, rural, remote and



underserved areas of the Union Territory. Chief Justice appreciated the initiative and observed that access to justice must not remain confined to courtrooms alone, but should meaningfully reach every citizen, especially those belonging to vulnerable and marginalized sections of society. He emphasized that such initiatives are essential for taking justice to the doorsteps of the people.

Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority, also appreciated the launch of the vehicles and stated that the same would greatly enhance the outreach and efficiency of District Legal Services Authorities. His Lordship further observed that this initiative marks another important step in making legal services more accessible to the common people. Justice Sanjeev Kumar also

expressed that similar Multi Utility Vehicles are planned to be launched shortly for districts of Kashmir Province as well, so that the benefits of this initiative reach every region of the Union Territory in an equitable manner. While interacting with media persons, Shazia Tabasum, Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority, highlighted that the vehicles shall be utilized for conducting legal awareness programmes, facilitating outreach camps, extending assistance to beneficiaries under various legal aid schemes, supporting Para Legal Volunteers, and ensuring better coordination of legal services activities at the district level. She further stated that the initiative would significantly strengthen the institutional capacity of District Legal Services Authorities in serving the people more efficiently.

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