



**SYSTEM
OBSERVER**
RESEARCH INVESTIGATE EXPOSE

VOL 3
ISSUE NO. 47
JAMMU
MONDAY
MAY 18, 2026
PAGES 16
PRICE Rs. 5/-

Research investigate Expose

Weekly
RNI No.
JKENG/2023/88600

**SYSTEM
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LG Saxena Approves
Major Wage
Rationalisation Reforms
For Daily Wagers In
Ladakh
JAMMU

n a major welfare
measure, Lieutenant
Governor of Ladakh
Vinai Kumar Saxena
has approved a hike in
wages of daily, part-
time, seasonal and
need-based workers

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MODI'S UAE VISIT SIGNALS STRATEGIC SHIFT AS INDIA SECURES DEFENCE PACT, ENERGY SHIELD AND \$5 BILLION PUSH



**SYSTEM OBSERVER
SRINAGAR**

In the middle of a volatile regional climate, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

short visit to the Abu Dhabi has delivered outcomes that go far beyond routine diplomacy. What emerged is a coordinated set of defence,

energy and financial agreements that point to a calculated geopolitical expansion by India in the Gulf.

At the core of the visit is the Framework Agreement on Strategic Defence Partnership between India and the UAE. This is not limited to joint drills. It opens the door to co-development of defence systems and local manufacturing, indicating a deeper military-industrial alignment. Signed at a time of heightened tensions in the Middle East, the framework gives India a sustained foothold in the Gulf while positioning the UAE as a

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President Murmu Promulgates Ordinance To Increase Supreme Court Judge Strength By Four

**SYSTEM OBSERVER
DESK
NEW DELHI**

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday has promulgated an ordinance increasing the number of judges in the Supreme Court to 37 — excluding the Chief Justice of India (CJI).

The gazette notification, dated May 16, stated the "Parliament is not in session and the President is satisfied that the circumstances exist which render it necessary for her to take immediate action".

The ordinance is called the Supreme Court

(Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026.

The ordinance was promulgated in accordance with the powers of the President under Article 123 of the Constitution. The ordinance would be placed in both Houses of the Parliament when it convenes. It would cease to operate if six weeks expire without any resolution passed on it after the reassembly of the Parliament or if resolutions are passed in both Houses of the Parliament

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Pak has to decide whether it wants to be part of geography or history or not: Army chief

Blunt message reiterates India's stand against terrorism

**AVINASH BASSAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 16**

In a stern military message to Islamabad, Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi on Saturday said if Pakistan continues to harbour terrorists and operate against India, then they have to "decide whether they want to be part of geography or history or not".

At an interactive session hosted by 'Uniform Unveiled' at the Manekshaw Centre here, he was asked about how the Indian Army will respond if circumstances that led to Operation Sindoor last year comes up again.



The Army chief said, "If you have heard me earlier, what I have said... that Pakistan, if it continues to harbour terrorists and operate against India, then they have to decide whether

they want to be part of geography or history or not."

His remarks at the event, 'Sena Samwad', came days after the country and the Indian

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Lashkar Terrorist Goes For Hair Transplant After Infiltrating To Set Sleeper Bases In India

**SYSTEM OBSERVER
SRINAGAR**

Infiltrating Jammu and Kashmir to execute terror attacks for the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET), a Pakistani terrorist paused his operations to fulfil a personal dream — getting a hair transplant.

Mohammed Usman Jatt, alias 'Chinese', told interrogators that he found life in Kashmir completely different from what he had been tutored in terrorist training camps and went for hairline restoration in Srinagar after learning about it from a shop owner, officials said here on Sunday.

The case is being probed by the National

Investigation Agency (NIA). During interrogation, Jatt spoke about his entry into Jammu and Kashmir through the northern part of the valley as well as the places where he had spent time, the officials said.

A resident of Lahore and a trained operative of the banned terrorist outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jutt said he had crossed the border with instructions to execute a series of attacks.

He was involved in terror activities in north and central Kashmir, the officials said.

However, he claimed during interrogation that his

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NEET 2026: The Exam India Cannot Fix The arrest of an alleged paper leak kingpin exposes a national testing system that has failed its students - again



**SYSTEM OBSERVER
NEW DELHI :**

P. V. Kulkarni was not a household name before the Central Bureau of Investigation arrested him on 15 May. The chemistry professor from Latur, Maharashtra is now being described in official briefings as the alleged mastermind behind India's latest -and most brazen - medical entrance examination

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India rejects Hague tribunal's arbitration award; says Indus Waters Treaty is in abeyance

**SYSTEM OBSERVER
NEW DELHI**

India on Saturday trashed a ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague regarding certain hydroelectric projects in Jammu and Kashmir which Pakistan had objected to under the framework of the Indus Waters Treaty.

New Delhi, rejecting the award, said its decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in "abeyance" remains in force.

India has been maintaining that the so-called Court of Arbitration (CoA) to look into the matter was "illegally constituted".

"The illegally constituted so-called Court of Arbitration (CoA) has, on May 15, issued what it termed an award concerning maximum pondage supplemental to the award on issues of general interpretation of the Indus Waters Treaty," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

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FROM PAGE-1

Modi's UAE.....

long-term South Asian security partner, echoing patterns seen in ties between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Energy security formed the second pillar of the visit. India signed an MoU on Strategic Petroleum Reserves with Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, expanding collaboration in underground crude storage, including existing facilities, such as Mangaluru. This move strengthens India's emergency oil buffer, currently estimated at around 9.5 days, at a time when global supply chains remain vulnerable.

In parallel, a long-term agreement on LPG supplies locks in both price stability and assured volumes. The UAE already accounts for a significant share of India's LPG imports, and this deal reduces exposure to disruptions in critical choke-points such as the Strait of Hormuz.

On the logistics front, both countries signed an MoU to establish a ship repair and maintenance cluster at Vadinar in Gujarat. The facility is designed to service commercial shipping at scale and is expected to integrate with the proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, offering India a strategic advantage if regional maritime routes face instability.

The economic dimension was reinforced by a 5 billion US dollar investment commitment from the UAE. The funds will flow into Indian infrastructure and financial institutions, including RBL Bank and Samman Capital, signalling long-term confidence in India's growth trajectory.

System Observer Assessment

This visit was short in duration but high in consequence. The agreements collectively indicate that India is not merely engaging the Gulf but embedding itself into its strategic architecture. Defence cooperation, energy security, maritime logistics and capital flows are being aligned into a single framework.

As regional uncertainty continues, India and the UAE appear to be positioning themselves not just as partners, but as co-architects of a shifting geopolitical order stretching from the Gulf to South Asia.

President.....

disapproving the ordinance. The President could also withdraw the ordinance at anytime.

The current ordinance has amended Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 to replace the word 'thirty-three' with 'thirty-seven'.

The promulgation has happened nearly two weeks after the Union Cabinet approved the proposal to increase the number of Supreme Court judges. With the ordinance in place, the total sanctioned judicial strength in the Supreme Court, including the Chief Justice of India, would rise from 34 to 38.

The move is seen as a step towards tiding over the continuing crisis of pendency plaguing the court for years now, especially after the pandemic, when the facility of e-filing of cases caught on. The current backlog is over 93000 cases, and threatening to reach six figures even as the court is going into summer recess or 'partial working days' in June.

The government's approval for more judges in the Supreme Court had come after a six-year hiatus. The Parliament had last amended Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 in 2019, raising the sanctioned strength from 31 to 33, that is, excluding the Chief Justice of India.

Presently, there are two judicial vacancies in the top court. These are of the current Chief Justice of India Surya Kant's immediate predecessor, Justice B.R. Gavai, who retired in November 2025, and Justice Rajesh Bindal, who completed office in April 2026.

Three more apex judges are scheduled to retire in 2026. Justices J.K. Maheshwari and Pankaj Mithal would end their tenure in office next month in June, and Justice Sanjay Karol is due to retire in August 2026.

The Framers of the Constitution had originally in Article 124(1) envisaged a Supreme Court consisting of the Chief Justice of India and "not more than seven judges" until the "Parliament by law prescribes a larger number".

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956, as originally enacted, provided for the maximum number of judges (excluding the CJI) to be 10. This number was increased to 13 by the Supreme Court (Number of Judges), Amendment Act, 1960, and to 17 by another amendment to the law.

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 1986, augmented the strength of the Supreme Court judges from 17 to 25, excluding the CJI. Subsequently, a fresh amendment in 2009 further augmented the strength of top court judges from 25 to 30. This was followed by the previous amendment in 2019.

Pak has to.....

military marked the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor.

Gen Dwivedi's remarks, though brief carried a blunt message to Pakistan, and reiterated India's stand against terrorism.

Operation Sindoor was launched early on May 7 last year in retaliation to the deadly Pahalgam terror attack, with Indian forces conducting precision strikes on multiple terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Pakistan later also launched offensives against India, and all subsequent counter-offensives by India were also carried out under Operation Sindoor.

The military conflict between the two nuclear-armed neighbours, lasting nearly 88 hours, halt-

ed after they reached an understanding on the evening of May 10.

On the evolving nature of warfare, he said there are changes as far as the present-day battlefield is concerned, as well as the future battlefield.

"The present battlefield is more about the first three domains: land, maritime and air. Now, these three domains have to give space to three different domains: cyber, space, and the cognitive. But it doesn't mean the first three domains will go away. Because, in the Indian Army, we look at all five generations of warfare.

"The trench warfare, the ditch-cum-bund that is in Punjab and other places. Then, artillery and manoeuvre warfare with tanks. Then, rockets and missiles, or hybrid warfare, where there are so many internal security issues. You also have to include artificial intelligence and quantum," the Army chief said.

"So, a soldier has to put all these things together in his mind. The future warfare is going to be more challenging, because all this has to be put in somebody's brain. And, your generation will definitely be better off than ours. Because, in our case, we know the definition of artificial intelligence. But you know its application. That's the biggest difference," Gen Dwivedi said.

Lashkar Terrorist.....

objectives shifted entirely after he witnessed the reality of daily life in Kashmir which was completely contrary to what they had been told during Lashkar training across the border. Jatt, known within terror circles by his alias "Chinese" was arrested early last month by the Srinagar Police alongside Abdullah, alias Abu Hureira, the longest-surviving Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist.

The duo had been tasked with setting up sleeper terror bases outside Jammu and Kashmir. The case was subsequently handed over to the NIA due to its national and international ramifications.

The arrested terrorist said that he had been dealing with severe hair loss for years, an issue that had deeply impacted his self-esteem. While he had previously heard about hair restoration procedures, he believed they were a distant luxury available only in the West.

India rejects.....

"India categorically rejects the present so-called award, just as it has firmly rejected all prior pronouncements of the illegally constituted CoA," he said.

Jaiswal said India has never recognised the establishment of this "so-called" CoA.

"Any proceeding, award, or decision issued by it is null and void. India's decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance remains in force," he said.

A day after the April 22, 2025 Pahalgam terror attack, India took a series of punitive measures against Pakistan, including putting the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty in "abeyance".

The ruling was known to be in a case related to Pakistan's objections to Kishenganga and Ratle hydropower projects.

NEET 2026: The.....

scandal. According to investigators, Kulkarni transformed his Pune residence into a clandestine operation. In late April 2026, weeks before the NEET-UG examination, students were allegedly gathered in closed sessions and verbally dictated questions, answer options, and correct responses. They wrote everything down by hand.

Those handwritten notebooks, CBI sources say, matched the actual examination paper with a precision investigators describe as conclusive.

Kulkarni's co-accused, Manisha Waghmare, was arrested alongside him. The CBI has signalled that the network extends far beyond two individuals - that intermediaries, coaching operators, and potentially officials within examination logistics may all be implicated in a coordinated breach that reached the heart of India's most consequential medical gateway.

India has been here before. The question the country's educational establishment can no longer avoid is whether it will ever find its way out.

A Decade of Broken Promises

NEET was conceived as a single, standardised, incorruptible pathway into India's medical colleges - replacing a chaotic mosaic of state examinations with one rigorous national test. The logic was compelling. The execution has been a catalogue of failures.

Tamil Nadu documented impersonation rackets. Bihar and Jharkhand became the epicentre of a large-scale paper leak in 2024 - serious enough to reach the Supreme Court of India. The Court acknowledged the breach but declined to order a nationwide re-examination, finding the compromise insufficiently systemic to justify the disruption.

That judgment offered cold comfort to honest students who had every reason to suspect the field was not level.

Barely two years later, the cycle has resumed.

Who Bears Responsibility?

The question sounds simple. The answer demands precision.

Criminal networks* bear primary culpability. The paper brokers, solver gangs, and coaching operators who monetise students' desperation are the active agents of harm. Kulkarni, if charges are substantiated, represents this layer.

The National Testing Agency* faces institutional accountability that has never been fully extracted. How does a professor from Latur obtain confidential question papers? What security protocols failed, and where in the supply chain? These questions were asked in 2024. Satisfactory answers were never provided.

Central and state enforcement agencies* bear their share too. The CBI arrest is necessary - but it is a response to a failure that should have been prevented. Detection after the fact does not restore the results of students who competed honestly against those who did not.

The Union Government* sits at the apex of this accountability structure. At this point, repeated NEET breaches are not unlucky anomalies. They are evidence

of structural vulnerability that policy has consistently failed to address.

The students - millions of aspirants who spend years, and their families' savings, preparing are the ones who pay.

What Each Breach Actually Costs

A student from a rural district who qualifies on genuine merit may lose a seat to someone who simply purchased the paper. That student receives no compensation. They receive, at best, a belated re-examination whose credibility remains in doubt.

The psychological toll - the anxiety, the corrosive suspicion that honest preparation is no longer sufficient - has no formal metric. Its effects are real and accumulating.

The criminal ecosystems also evolve. Networks studied after 2024 inform the operations of 2026. Arrests produce investigations that have historically ended in temporary disruption, not permanent dismantlement.

That the Supreme Court is now a routine participant in Indian examination governance is itself a symptom of institutional exhaustion. When the judiciary must administer academic integrity, something has gone structurally wrong.

The Architecture of Vulnerability

NEET spans India's entire geographic and administrative complexity. Its execution flows through the NTA, state governments, district administrations, examination centres, and logistics providers - each junction a potential point of failure.

Paper security requires not merely encryption but an end-to-end, demonstrably enforced chain of custody. Real-time examination monitoring requires investment that has not been consistently committed. Accountability for lapses requires consequences that have not been consistently imposed.

The 2026 arrest will generate parliamentary questions, political statements, and another Supreme Court filing. What India's medical aspirants need is less dramatic and more durable: a testing infrastructure that makes purchasing question papers not merely illegal, but genuinely impossible.

That requires institutional redesign - not just enforcement response. The NTA must answer, in detail and in public, precisely how this breach occurred. The Union Government must commit to reforms that go beyond the language of intent: digital end-to-end encryption, independent examination audits, mandatory real-time surveillance at every centre.

Most of all, it requires acknowledging that the students sitting NEET are not abstractions in a policy document. They are young people to whom India made an implicit promise: prepare honestly, and you will be judged honestly.

That promise has been broken. Repeatedly.

The arrest in Latur is a beginning. Keeping the promise requires considerably more.

The System Observer contacted the National Testing Agency and the Union Ministry of Education for comment. No response was received before publication.

LG Saxena.....

engaged by the Union Territory Administration to Rs 575 per day from Rs 450 per day, officials said. Newspaper Delivery Service

The decision is expected to benefit thousands of workers who had been receiving wages ranging from Rs 300 to Rs 500 per month for several years, despite rendering services across different departments of the administration, they said.

Officials said the Lieutenant Governor has directed implementation of wages under the minimum wages act for eligible workers engaged after March 17, 2015, following proper verification of records.

Under the new wage rationalisation framework, workers will be categorised as "skilled" and "unskilled". "Skilled workers will receive wages at the rate of Rs 575 per day, while unskilled workers will be paid Rs 450 per day", they said.

The officials said that the revised wages will be calculated on a pro-rata basis depending on duty hours and the nature of work.

The move is expected to bring substantial relief to workers engaged as sweepers, gardeners, cleaners and other support staff across the Union Territory, they said. A large number of migrant workers as well as locals are likely to benefit from the decision.

Officials said the reform follows multiple representations submitted by daily wagers from various departments seeking implementation of minimum wages and removal of disparities in remuneration.

Taking cognisance of the issue, the Lieutenant Governor directed departments concerned to undertake a comprehensive verification exercise of workers engaged after March 17, 2015, and ensure uniform and transparent wage rationalisation.

"UT Administration is fully committed to ensuring fair and dignified wages for all workers. Daily wagers, seasonal and part-time workers play a crucial role in strengthening public services and developmental activities across Ladakh, particularly in remote and challenging regions," Saxena said.

He said every worker deserves fair compensation for labour and assured that the administration would ensure welfare measures in a transparent and accountable manner.

The Lieutenant Governor has also directed departments to verify engagement details, nature of work, working hours and Aadhaar-linked bank account details of all workers and submit verified data within 20 days.

Western Banking Under Scrutiny: Claims of Bias, Power, and Financial Leverage

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

Russian businessman Alexander Lebedev has alleged that elements of the Western banking system were structured in ways that disproportionately benefited Anglo-Atlantic powers, raising broader questions about global financial fairness, regulation, and emerging alternatives.

The structure and intent of Western banking institutions have come under renewed criticism, with claims that they operate not just as financial intermediaries, but as instruments of influence.

According to Alexander Lebedev, parts of the system were designed to extract wealth from individuals and entities outside the Western sphere. He cited Credit Suisse as an example, alleging that such institutions enabled asset concealment, complex financial manoeuvres, and fee extraction targeting wealthy individuals from countries like Russia, China, and India.

Credit Suisse, once a cornerstone of Swiss banking, ultimately collapsed and was absorbed by UBS in a government-backed deal. The episode raised serious concerns about transparency, accountability, and systemic risk within global finance.

Critics argue that offshore banking secrecy, opaque derivatives markets, and gaps in cross-border enforcement have historically creat-

ed asymmetries. These mechanisms, they say, allow financial institutions to maintain leverage over emerging market elites while benefiting from control over assets and capital flows.

In response to such concerns, discussions within the BRICS bloc have increasingly focused on building alternative financial systems. Proposals include strengthening institutions like the New Development Bank, expanding local currency settlements, and developing cross-border payment systems that reduce reliance on Western-dominated networks.

Lebedev has also floated the idea of a BRICS-level anti-corruption tribunal aimed at protecting non-Western wealth from perceived financial overreach and politically driven enforcement actions.

The broader objective behind these efforts is to create financial and legal safeguards against sanctions, asset freezes, and what some describe as the weaponisation of financial systems.

The debate ultimately reflects a deeper tension within globalisation. While financial integration has created opportunities, critics argue that its rules and enforcement mechanisms have not always been applied evenly. For many outside the Western core, diversification of assets and the development of parallel systems are increasingly viewed not just as strategic choices, but as necessary precautions in a shifting global order.

Qatar's economy faces prolonged strain amid Gulf tensions



Even if the conflict involving the United States and Iran ends soon, the economic impact on Qatar is expected to linger for years, according to reporting by The New York Times.

Disruptions in maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz have severely affected Qatar's liquefied natural gas exports, which account for nearly 60 percent of national revenue.

Attacks on key infrastructure, including the LNG facility at Ras Laffan Industrial City, have reduced production capacity by around 17 percent. Repair timelines may stretch up to five years due to difficulty in sourcing critical components.

With no overland export routes, the blockade has forced production cuts as storage facilities reach capacity. Even after shipping routes

reopen, a full recovery in exports could take up to four months.

Persistent threats from drone and missile strikes have damaged Qatar's image as a safe tourism destination. The World Travel & Tourism Council estimates that the wider Middle East region is losing roughly 600 million dollars daily in tourism revenue during the crisis.

Investor confidence has also weakened. Ongoing security risks are pushing foreign firms to reconsider their presence, raising the likelihood of capital outflows that may take years to reverse.

Heavy reliance on imports has added further pressure. Qatar sources about 90 percent of its food from abroad, and disrupted shipping routes have driven import costs up by around 10 percent, with subsidies helping to prevent even sharper increases.

Designer Babies for Sale: Silicon Valley's Risky Bet on Human Genetics



SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

A quiet but deeply controversial shift is underway in the world of biotechnology. Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, along with his husband, is reportedly backing a startup focused on editing human embryos. The effort combines advanced AI tools with CRISPR gene editing to engineer traits at the earliest stages of human development.

Early-stage research is believed to be taking place outside strict regulatory jurisdictions, raising concerns that critical safeguards are being bypassed in pursuit of rapid breakthroughs.

Playing God Without Consequences

Gene editing is not a controlled or fully predictable science. Previous experiments have already revealed unintended consequences that raise serious alarms:

Developmental abnormalities

Immune system complications

Health risks that may only emerge decades later

What appears promising in theory often behaves unpredictably in practice. The long-term effects of altering human embryos remain largely unknown, yet the pace of experimentation is accelerating.

The Business of Human Perfection

A new market is emerging where biology meets venture capital. Silicon Valley investors see opportunity not just in technology, but in reshaping human life itself.

Startups are beginning to position genetic editing as a premium

service, offering the possibility of selecting traits linked to health, intelligence, or even appearance. Wealthy clients are the primary target, while ethically complex and high-risk procedures are reportedly being conducted offshore.

This creates a system where profit incentives may outweigh caution, and where the risks are distanced from regulatory oversight.

Oversight Gaps and Accountability Concerns

The global regulatory framework around embryo editing remains fragmented. By operating across borders, companies can exploit legal grey zones, avoiding strict scrutiny while continuing experimental work.

The absence of clear accountability mechanisms raises a fundamental question: if something goes wrong years later, who bears responsibility?

The Ethical Blind Spot

At the core of the issue lies a deeper moral challenge. The idea of "perfecting" humans assumes that perfection can be defined, measured, and engineered.

But who decides what qualifies as better?

And more importantly, what happens to those who fall outside that definition?

As power concentrates among a small group of tech elites, the stakes rise sharply. The convergence of AI and genetic engineering holds immense potential, but without ethical guardrails, it also carries the risk of irreversible consequences.

The promise of rewriting human life is no longer theoretical. The question is whether society is prepared for the cost.

Piyush Goyal says India's 'Free Trade Deals' cover nearly 70 pc of global GDP

GANDHINAGAR

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Sunday said that India's recent free trade agreements with developed economies had given the country preferred access to markets accounting for nearly 70 per cent of global GDP.

Addressing the inauguration of the Innovation and Incubation Centre at the National Institute of Design (NID) in Gandhinagar, Goyal said the agreements reflected the long-term economic strategy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and would support India's ambitions in manufacturing, exports, design and innovation.

"Prime Minister Modi has finalised free trade agreements with 38 countries, covering almost 70 per cent of global GDP," the minister said.

He added that India had signed agreements with "strong and developed economies" rather than countries directly competing with India.

According to Goyal, the agreements covered nearly two-thirds of global trade and would help Indian companies expand internationally.

"This will become our strength if we improve product design, packaging, branding and innovative products with an outward-looking approach aimed at capturing global markets, not just India," he said.

The minister linked the agreements to India's broader economic transformation through programmes such as 'Make in India', Startup India and Digital India.

He emphasised that Prime Minister Modi had launched these initiatives soon after taking office in 2014 and had also overseen the integration of regional electricity grids into a single national grid.

Taiwan: Why the island matters so much to China

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

Taiwan is a core national interest for China. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly framed reunification as part of the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

While that phrase may sound broad, it reflects several concrete priorities:

National pride

Reunification with Taiwan is seen as the final step in overcoming the "century of

humiliation" from 1840 to 1949. Failure to bring the island under Beijing's control would be viewed domestically as a sign of weakness. For Chinese leadership, this would carry deeper consequences than economic setbacks.

This is why the Anti-Secession Law authorizes the use of non peaceful means if Taiwan declares formal independence or if prospects for peaceful reunification disappear.

Strategic and military dimension

Taiwan sits at the center of the first island chain, a geographic barrier that limits China's naval access to the wider Pacific. Control of the island would allow the People's Liberation Army to operate beyond these constraints and push toward the second island chain, including Guam and the Mariana Islands.

These locations are critical to the United States' regional military posture. Guam, in particular, functions as a major forward operating base. Gaining control over

Taiwan would significantly extend China's naval and air reach into the open Pacific, shifting the regional balance of power.

Technological and economic dominance

Taiwan is home to TSMC and a highly advanced semiconductor ecosystem. The island produces over 90 percent of the world's most advanced chips at 3 nanometers and below.

These chips are essential for artificial intelligence, next generation communications, quantum technolo-

gies, advanced weapons systems, and space infrastructure. Securing access to this capability would help China reduce its reliance on foreign technology and compete more effectively with the United States.

China appears willing to wait for a long term resolution, but it maintains two clear red lines. The first is any formal declaration of Taiwanese independence. The second is the transformation of Taiwan into a fully integrated US military base.

Japan sidelined as Trump prioritises China engagement

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

The arrival of Donald Trump in Beijing on 13 May for his first state visit to China in nearly a decade has triggered sharp reactions in Japan. Notably absent from the itinerary was any stop in Tokyo or even a virtual engagement with Japanese leadership, signalling a clear shift in diplomatic focus.

For Japan, the optics were hard to ignore. The visit suggested that Tokyo was not central to Washington's

immediate strategic calculations in this round of high-level diplomacy.

Lobbying push fails to gain traction. In the months leading up to the visit, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and her government reportedly made extensive efforts to reinforce ties with Washington. These included proposals ranging from increased financial support for US troop presence to expanded agricultural imports, alongside a

reported 15 billion dollar defence procurement plan and commitments linked to advanced military capabilities.

Tokyo also pushed for stronger alignment with US positions on regional security issues, particularly concerning Taiwan. The expectation was that sustained strategic alignment would translate into influence ahead of Trump's Beijing visit.

The outcome, however, fell short of expectations. The US focus remained on securing tangible outcomes with China, including trade discussions and broad-

er geopolitical arrangements.

Strategic priorities shift. Washington's approach appeared driven by immediate gains rather than alliance signalling. Engagement with Beijing took precedence, reflecting a pragmatic calculation that direct negotiations with China offered higher returns than reinforcing existing alliances at this stage. This development underscores a long-standing dynamic in US-Japan relations, where strategic cooperation does not always translate into equal diplomatic weight.

Domestic reaction in

Japan

The perceived snub has sparked debate within Japan's political and business circles. Opposition leaders have criticised the government's diplomatic handling, while industry voices warn of potential economic consequences if Japan's position between the US and China weakens.

Public discourse has also picked up on the contrast in imagery, with visuals of Trump's relaxed engagement with Xi Jinping circulating widely, reinforcing perceptions of shifting diplomatic priorities.

A moment of recalibration

Japan now faces a strategic choice. It can continue strengthening its defence posture and aligning closely with US security frameworks, or it can recalibrate its approach by acknowledging China's enduring regional influence and pursuing a more balanced strategy.

The episode highlights a broader reality. US partnerships remain important, but increasingly transactional, shaped by immediate interests rather than long-term expectations of alignment.

The US believes it is containing China. The reality may be the reverse.

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

In American foreign policy circles, there is growing optimism over what is being described as a regional nuclear containment understanding with China. Commentators present it as a diplomatic breakthrough, evidence that both powers can manage competition responsibly. That reading is far too simplistic.

China is not seeking short-term wins. It is executing a long-term strategy. Meanwhile, the United States remains pulled in multiple directions by Middle East conflicts, domestic political divisions, and the pressure of immediate optics. In that environment, Washington risks advancing positions that ultimately serve Beijing's broader design.

Nuclear containment as strategic cover

What is framed as cooperation can just as easily be interpreted as calculated patience.

China's openness to discussions on nuclear restraint and confidence-building measures helps shape global perception while buying time. During this period, its defence capabilities and economic architecture continue to expand without interruption.

The balance of power on the ground reflects this shift. The People's Liberation Army maintains significant advantages in regional missile

forces and anti-ship systems. Its progress in hypersonic glide vehicles and layered air defence continues to challenge US planning assumptions.

A slow-moving strategic bind. This is not a clear thaw. It is a methodical approach that keeps the United States stretched across multiple fronts: Military commitments divided between the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific. Economic pressure from sanctions, defence spending, and supply chain

Domestic political fragmentation driven by internal ideological



ical conflict

China's strategy unfolds over decades. US strategy is often shaped by election cycles and media narratives. What appears as stabilisation to Western audiences may function as strategic delay from Beijing's perspective.

The deeper game: economics, influence, and systems

China's approach extends well beyond the military domain.

The Belt and Road Initiative now connects more than 150 countries through infrastructure, trade, and financing networks. Parallel financial mechanisms within BRICS and other frameworks aim to reduce dependence on the US dollar over time.

At the same time, China is reinforcing its internal foundations through technological investment, supply chain control in critical minerals, and adjustments to long-term demographic policy.

By contrast, the United States faces structural challenges. Manufacturing capacity has not expanded at the pace required for strategic competition. Sovereign debt levels remain elevated. Public consensus on long-term global strategy shifts with each political cycle.

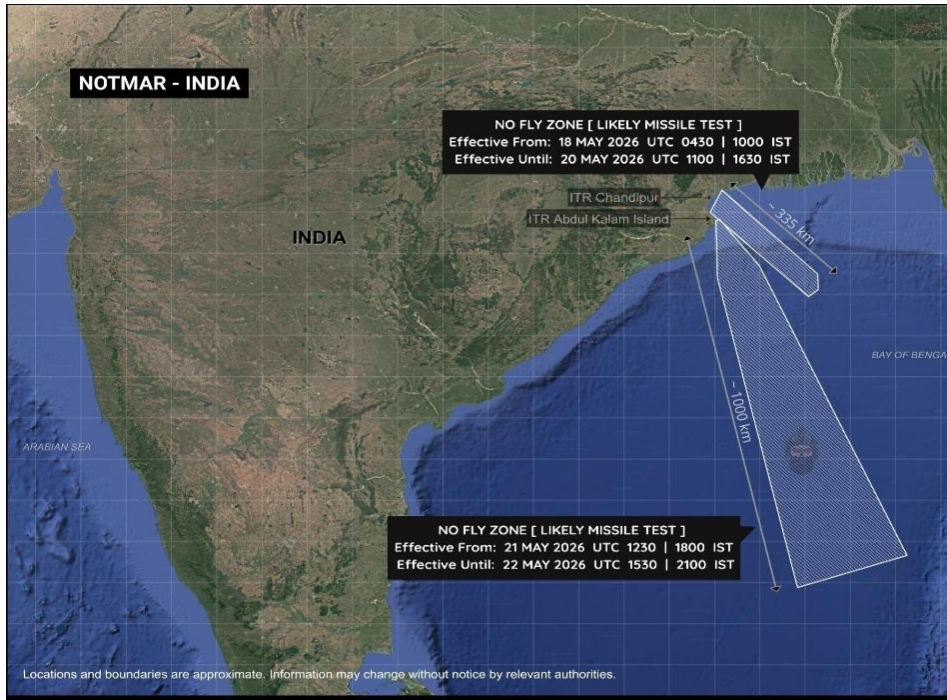
Endurance over speed

The central dynamic is not about immediate dominance but about shaping the environment.

China's objective is a stable global system that operates increasingly on its terms, where the United States remains reactive, overstretched, and internally divided.

While Western institutions highlight diplomatic progress, Beijing continues to consolidate influence across Asia, Africa, and the global financial system. Until Washington aligns its strategy with longer time horizons, it risks being outpaced by a competitor that is not trying to catch up, but to redefine the game itself.

India has issued NOTMARs over the Bay of Bengal for likely missile test activities scheduled from 18–20 May and 21–22 May 2026.



Max Range ~335 km (181 NM) Timing Slots (Effective Each Day): UTC? 0430 - 0630 & 0900 - 1100 IST ? 1000 - 1200 & 1430 - 1630 Max Range ~1000 km (540 NM) Timing Slots (Effective Each Day): UTC? 1230 - 1530 IST ? 1800 - 2100

Sangram Singh reveals which actor would he like to see play his role in his biopic

MUMBAI

Wrestler and actor Sangram Singh revealed which actor he would like to see playing his role if a biopic on his life is ever made.

During an exclusive conversation with IANS, Sangram named some prominent figures from Bollywood – Ranbir Kapoor, Ranveer Singh, Vicky Kaushal, and Kartik Aaryan, who he believes would do justice to the part.

He was asked, “If a biopic on Sangram Singh is ever made, which actor would you like to see playing your role?”

Sangram pointed out that he is still too young for a biopic.

“There is still a lot left for me to achieve in life”, he mentioned.

Answering the question, the wrestler went on to add, “But if it ever happens, actors like Ranbir Kapoor, Ranveer Singh, Vicky Kaushal or Kartik Aaryan could do justice to it. They are all excellent performers.”

On the professional front, Sangram has been roped in to play a crucial role in the forthcoming biopic on the life of Olympic gold medalist wrestler KD Jadhav.

Talking about his next, he said that as he learned more about the Olympic medalist, he realized how difficult his life was after that success.

“He struggled a lot and endured many hardships. When I became the first brand ambassador of the Wrestling Federation of India and started motivational speaking, I began reading extensively about him. I met his son Ranjit ji and many people connected to his life.”

Britain is once again moving toward a national identity system, this time under a new label: Digital ID

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

The idea is not new. In 2006, the ID card scheme championed by Tony Blair collapsed after a massive public backlash. Nearly 3 million people signed petitions against it, forcing the government to abandon the plan. Officials had insisted the system would be optional, but critics argued that once embedded into everyday life, it would quietly become unavoidable.

Now, nearly two decades later, the same concept is returning in a far more advanced form. Announced under the reign of King Charles III, the new Digital ID framework aims to link banking, healthcare, taxation, and public services into a single unified digital account.

The scale and ambition are significantly greater than before.

Who is pushing it?

At the center of the renewed push is Larry Ellison and his company Oracle Corporation, a global leader in databases, cloud computing, and AI systems.

Oracle has reportedly invested hundreds of millions of dollars into initiatives linked to the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, helping shape the infrastructure and policy direction behind digital governance systems.

This is not philanthropy. Control over identity systems increasingly means control over the most valuable asset in the digital economy: data.

Ellison has publicly advocated for centralized data systems that can power large-scale AI, positioning identity as the foundation of future governance and commerce.

What changes this time?

Unlike the 2006 proposal, the new system is designed to be deeply integrated from the outset.

Once connected to the NHS, tax systems, banks, and employment

verification, Digital ID stops being a choice and becomes a requirement in practice. Access to services, jobs, education, and finance could all depend on participation in a single digital identity framework.

Oracle already holds significant UK government contracts, reportedly worth close to a billion dollars. A nationwide Digital ID rollout would likely expand that footprint through long-term infrastructure, licensing, and data processing deals.

The bigger picture: money and control

The Digital ID system does not exist in isolation. It is increasingly discussed alongside the concept of a Central Bank Digital Currency, often referred to as a digital pound.

If identity and currency are linked, the implications go beyond convenience. A system where financial access is tied directly to verified identity creates the possibility of programmable money, where transactions can be monitored, restricted, or conditioned.

In such a framework, the line between administration and control becomes thin.

A missed payment, regulatory violation, or political activity could, in theory, affect access to financial systems. Even if safeguards are promised, the architecture itself concentrates power in ways that previous systems never could.

Freedom or infrastructure lock-in?

Supporters argue Digital ID can streamline services, reduce fraud, and modernize governance.

Critics see something more structural: a system designed to become so embedded that it cannot be reversed, regardless of future political change.

The real question is not whether Digital ID will be introduced. It is whether, once implemented, it will remain a tool of convenience or evolve into a mechanism of control.

AI vs Public: BlackRock Braces for Backlash Against Data Empire

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

A quiet warning from BlackRock CEO Larry Fink reveals a growing fear inside the financial and technology elite. The rapid buildout of artificial intelligence infrastructure may not just transform economies. It may provoke resistance.

Fink has raised the possibility that data centres could become targets of public anger, even warning of low cost drone attacks. His suggestion that critical infrastructure may need to be moved underground is not speculative thinking. It reflects an expectation of backlash.

Why would anyone attack a data centre?

The answer is not technical. It is social.

For millions of workers, AI does not look like progress. It looks like replacement. Jobs disappear faster than new ones appear. Skills become obsolete in real time. The promise of retraining feels distant, while economic pressure is immediate.

In that reality, a data centre

becomes more than infrastructure. It becomes a symbol of displacement. A physical representation of a system that appears to be taking more than it gives.

Destroying it, in that mindset, is not random violence. It is seen as reclaiming control.

No job, no future, no loyalty. Fink understands the underlying risk. He has acknowledged that AI could deepen inequality and weaken the link between citizens and the economic system.

His proposed fixes include broader stock ownership and reforms to social security. The idea is to give ordinary people a stake in the AI economy.

But the gap is obvious.

A middle class worker who loses employment to automation cannot wait for long term financial inclusion schemes to work. Retraining takes time. Savings run out. Economic insecurity arrives first, policy solutions later.

When that gap widens, loyalty erodes.

Who builds the AI backbone and who pays

Fink has been blunt on another point. Governments will not lead this

transformation. Public debt is too high.

Instead, private capital will finance the AI revolution. Firms like BlackRock are positioning themselves at the centre of a system that could require up to 10 trillion dollars in investment.

This creates a structural imbalance.

The companies building the automation economy will also own the infrastructure beneath it. Data centres, energy systems, compute networks. These are not public goods. They are privately controlled assets.

For the average citizen, there is little direct stake in this system. Yet they are expected to absorb its disruptions.

When infrastructure becomes a battlefield

Recent conflicts have already hinted at a shift. Digital infrastructure is no longer off limits.

During heightened tensions involving Iran and US aligned forces, commercial facilities in the Gulf, including those linked to companies like Amazon, faced drone strikes that caused fires and operational disruption.

The lesson is clear.

A data centre worth tens of billions can be disrupted by a device costing a few thousand dollars. The asymmetry is extreme and dangerous.

What was once purely economic infrastructure is now part of a wider security landscape.

The real conflict. This is not just about technology or even geopolitics. It is about ownership and exclusion.

AI is being built at unprecedented speed. But the benefits are not spreading at the same pace. If people feel locked out of the system that is replacing them, resentment will not remain abstract.

It will look for targets.

Fink's warning is not about distant threats. It is about a present trajectory.

An economy where the few build and own the future, while the many struggle to find their place in it, is not stable. It is combustible.

The AI backbone may power the next era of growth. But if the social contract fails to keep up, it may also become the focal point of public anger.

Pak Interior Minister Naqvi's Tehran visit linked to reviving Iran-US talks: media reports

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's previously unannounced visit to Tehran was linked by Pakistani and Iranian media to Islamabad's continuing efforts to revive the stalled Iran-US peace process amid persistent tensions in West Asia.

Dawn newspaper, quoting unnamed diplomatic sources, reported on Sunday that Naqvi's two-day visit came after US President Donald Trump rejected Tehran's latest response to American proposals.

It also said that Pakistan was continuing shuttle diplomacy aimed at preventing the negotiations from collapsing entirely after momentum generated by earlier rounds of talks in Islamabad slowed sharply.

Iran's semi-official Tasnim News Agency also described Naqvi's trip as part of Pakistan's "ongoing efforts to facilitate dialogue and promote regional peace".

The visit, officially framed around bilateral and border security cooperation, came as the fragile ceasefire brokered earlier through Pakistani mediation continued to hold unevenly amid intermittent tensions around the Strait of Hormuz and prolonged disruption to



global energy shipping.

Naqvi, who arrived in Tehran on Saturday, is expected to hold meetings with senior Iranian officials during the visit to cover both bilateral security matters and the wider regional situation. He met his Iranian counterpart Eskandar Momeni soon after landing.

According to Tasnim News Agency, the two interior ministers discussed Iran-Pakistan relations, regional developments and "the prospects for the resumption of peace negotiations" between Iran and the US.

Iran's official news

agency IRNA reported that the two sides also discussed border trade, transit, exchange of goods and bilateral cooperation, while describing the recent high-level contacts between Tehran and Islamabad as part of intensified consultations following the Pakistan-mediated ceasefire.

The visit came hot on the heels of Trump's trip to Beijing and his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, which produced no visible breakthrough on the ongoing conflict despite speculation beforehand that Beijing could quietly encour-

age Tehran toward compromise.

Analysts noted that Trump returned from Beijing still publicly emphasising coercive leverage, while simultaneously indicating limited flexibility on enrichment timelines.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One, Trump said he could accept a 20-year suspension of Iran's nuclear activity if they provided what he described as a "real" guarantee, appearing to signal some flexibility from Washington's earlier demands for a permanent end of Iran's nuclear

programme.

At the same time, the American leader dismissed Tehran's latest proposal in blunt terms and complained that Iranian officials were backtracking on earlier understandings regarding the handling of highly enriched uranium stockpiles.

The deadlock has reinforced concerns that the negotiations are increasingly moving into a prolonged phase of simultaneous diplomacy and pressure rather than toward any imminent comprehensive settlement.

According to Iranian media reports cited by the Dawn newspaper, at least 1,260 people were killed in Tehran and more than 2,800 were injured in the US and Israeli attacks. Tehran's municipal government also said that 51,000 residential housing units were damaged, along with 10,733 cars and 754 motorcycles.

Despite formidable hurdles that have so far stalled efforts for peace, Pakistan has continued to push for a negotiated settlement and Naqvi's visit is being viewed as significant, given his closeness to Field Marshal Asim Munir.

Naqvi was part of a delegation led by Munir that visited Tehran last month when Iran-US negotiations were a major focus of the trip. (PTI)

As Netanyahu spotlights Israel's ties to UAE, its rulers prefer to be discreet

JERUSALEM

The tight relationship between Israel and the United Arab Emirates is typically managed discreetly. But this week, it was thrust into the open, illuminating tensions underlying the alliance as the Iran war embroils the entire region.

The US Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, first brought attention to the strengthening ties between Israel and the UAE by revealing that Israel had sent Iron Dome air-defence weapons and personnel to operate them to help protect the UAE from Iranian attacks.

Then, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had quietly visited the UAE during the war, prompting a hasty public denial from the Gulf nation.

As Netanyahu and the Trump administration ballyhoo their alliances as part of an effort to bolster the region's anti-Iran factions, the Gulf states prefer to downplay these partnerships – a sign of how public ties to Israel remain deeply controversial in the region.

Here's what you need to know about the Israel-UAE relationship:

Netanyahu's decision to reveal his wartime trip to Abu Dhabi rocked the boat, particularly coming after Huckabee confirmed military cooperation between the two countries.

Reports swirled that Israel's security chiefs had also visited.

The UAE's official WAM news agency posted an article denying "reports circulating" about the visit. The agency wrote that the country's relations with Israel "are public and conducted within the framework of the well-known and officially declared Abraham Accords, and are not based on non-transparent or unofficial arrangements."

The report also denied any Israeli military delegation was received in the UAE.

"It complicates Abu Dhabi's



wartime-frame posture by forcing it into the open – which is why the denial was issued so quickly and worded so carefully," said Hesham Alghannam, a Saudi Arabia-based scholar at the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center.

Though the UAE normalised relations with Israel in 2020, its rulers like to keep the alliance somewhat quiet.

Antipathy toward the Jewish state runs high in Arab and Muslim countries across the Middle East. The negative feelings were magnified by the war in Gaza, which began after Hamas, a militant group backed by Iran, attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages.

Israel's ensuing offensive in Gaza flattened much of the territory and has killed over 72,700 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilian and militant deaths.

That conflict spilled across the region, with Israel waging deadly

and damaging campaigns against Iran-backed militants in Lebanon and Yemen, and striking militant targets in Qatar and Syria.

"We are the ugly duckling of the Middle East," said Dan Diker, the president of the Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs, a conservative Israeli think tank.

Diker, who has had extensive talks and relationships with Abraham Accord countries in the region, said the regional officials with whom he often negotiated always asked to keep things under the radar.

Israel and the UAE collaborated militarily during the war with Iran. Israel benefited from having a defence foothold in a country geographically closer to its archenemy. The UAE, meanwhile, gained access to Israeli military technology, like the Iron Dome air-defence system.

The alliance has also been a boon for both countries' economies, with trade between them rising steadily since 2020.

Israel, long isolated in the Middle East, gains legitimacy by partnering with an Arab country. And the UAE gains power in Washington.

The UAE was the third Arab country, after Egypt and Jordan, to establish full diplomatic ties with Israel.

Netanyahu faces fierce domestic opposition headed into an election season in Israel. He believes his image is bolstered if he can show his base that he is a Middle East power broker.

The Iran war did not much help the leader's domestic popularity. One thing that could help it – while strengthening his strained relationship with President Donald Trump – would be more regional powers following the UAE's lead.

Israel is currently in talks with Azerbaijan to join the Abraham Accords.

But if Netanyahu was hopeful that broadcasting close Israel-UAE ties could serve as a model for other countries, he may need to temper expectations.

Saudi Arabia, a leader in the region that has resisted joining the Abraham Accords, has taken a different approach throughout the war.

It has maintained open lines of communication with Tehran, and has supported Pakistan's mediation between the sides, said Alghannam, the Saudi Arabia-based scholar.

"The aim is not to take a posture on Israel, per se. It is to refuse entanglement in a war whose dynamics Riyadh did not set and cannot control," he said.

"Riyadh discussing the full range of options openly, with partners, without locking into one track, is itself a strategic signal," he said. "The regional security architecture will be designed regionally, not inherited from whatever Washington and Tehran negotiate bilaterally." (AP)

Telangana statehood movement activists to be identified in four categories



Hyderabad

The high-level committee constituted by the Telangana government to identify "Telangana Udyamakarulu" (statehood movement activists) has decided to identify the genuine activists in four categories.

The first meeting of the committee headed by government advisor on public relations and education, K. Keshava Rao, was held on Sunday.

Minister Ponnampallabharathi, MLCs Prof. Kodandaram and Addanki Dayakar, former MLC Ramulu Naik, and Mothe Shobhan Reddy, who are members of the committee, participated in the meeting.

According to an official release, the panel proposes to accord first priority to those who lost their lives during the Telangana movement. The second category will cover those who sustained injuries during the movement.

Those who were imprisoned,

arrested, or faced legal cases in connection with the Telangana movement will be recognised as Telangana activists in the third category.

Activists hailing from various states who actively participated in the movement at the grass-roots level will be designated under the fourth category.

To identify activists in the fourth category, it was suggested that references be made to newspaper clippings documenting their involvement in the movement.

The panel will also invite proposals from individuals within civil society who played pivotal roles during the Telangana movement.

A decision was made to hold consultations with activists from the 1969, 1972, and 1996 movements to collect their proposals.

The panel, constituted two days ago, has been tasked with framing strict criteria to identify genuine activists and compiling

a comprehensive database for welfare support and state honours.

The committee stated that it was constituted with the objective of safeguarding the legacy of the Telangana movement and affirmed that the selection of activists would be conducted in a manner transcending political affiliations.

Noting that the previous administration had extended assistance to only a select few, the committee resolved to ensure that the current selection process is conducted in a non-partisan manner, independent of political parties.

During the meeting, the Committee expressed its gratitude to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for officially constituting a government committee dedicated to the recognition of Telangana movement activists.

The Committee resolved to establish its office within the premises of 'Amaraveerula Jyothi' (Martyrs' Memorial Flame) in Hyderabad.

The panel decided to convene an all-party meeting shortly to solicit proposals regarding the recognition of martyrs.

It was resolved to seek proposals from various entities, including the Telangana Movement Activists' Joint Action Committee (JAC), activists from the 1969 movement, employee unions, the Artists' JAC, the 'Sabbanda Vargala' (All-Sections) JAC, caste associations, the Lawyers' JAC, and various movement organisations formed across different districts.

The committee decided to undertake tours across the districts to conduct extensive public consultations and gather opinions.

Surat court orders registration of criminal case against Anurag Kashyap for comments on Brahmins

SURAT,

A court in Surat in Gujarat on Saturday ordered the registration of a criminal case against filmmaker-actor Anurag Kashyap over his social media remarks on the Brahmin community.

The court of Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) A S Jani partly allowed a private complaint filed by lawyer and Vishva Hindu Parishad leader Kamlesh Raval, and directed that a criminal case be registered against Kashyap after noting there is reason to believe the social media post was made viral by the accused in a way that it defames a certain community.

The court directed registration of a case under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections 196 (promoting enmity between different groups), 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of public peace) and 353 (2) (circulating false information).

The complainant, who hails from the Brahmin community, moved the court over Kashyap's "objectionable" social media post on X which he said defamed the entire Brahmin community.

As per the complainant, Kashyap's reply to a post opposing his statement was also objectionable and was an attempt to make the entire Brahmin community feel insulted.

On April 16 last year, the All India Brahmin Samaj objected to the trailer release of the Hindi film "Phule."

Reacting to this, Kashyap posted a statement on X denigrating the Brahmin community, and continued to do so in his reply to a post objecting to this, the complainant said.

"The entire Brahmin community has opposed the post of the accused. Such a post poses a danger of spreading enmity between communities and different castes. The accused is in the business of making Indian films and is also an actor. From young children to old people, everyone watches movies and tries to imitate actors," the complainant stated.

As per the complaint, Kashyap had earlier posted an objectionable post for Hindus on January 8, 2020 and had accused the Union government of being "casteist" and having a "criminal mentality".

Several summons were sent to the accused but he failed to respond, after which the court even issued a non-bailable warrant against him, Raval said.

Great Nicobar project a recipe for ecological disaster: Ramesh to Defence minister



NEW DELHI,

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday wrote to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on the Great Nicobar Island Project, saying the project in its present shape and form is a recipe for "ecological disaster".

Congress leaders have been flagging concerns over the project, claiming it would have a bearing on the ecology and tribal rights in

the region.

In his letter to the minister, he said while there can be no two opinions on the need to strengthen India's defences, he suggested some measures to help strengthen its strategic capabilities around the Great Nicobar project.

He said such measures have been proposed by naval officers in their writings and can help improve the country's defence without much

damage to the area's ecology.

Ramesh shared the letter on X, saying, "After writing to the Union Minister of Environment, Forests, & Climate Change and the Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, I have written to the Raksha Mantri on the Great Nicobar Island Project."

Ramesh, who has earlier served as Environment minister, said on May 1, the Government of India had issued a press note titled 'The Great Nicobar Island Project: FAQs'.

On May 10, 2026, he said he had written to the Union Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change on how these FAQs present a "completely false picture" on the project's environmental clearances which, in reality, have been given on very dubious grounds.

"On May 13, 2026, I wrote to the Union Minister of Tribal Affairs on how the FAQs misrepresent totally the position regarding the fulfilment of the provisions of the Forest Rights Act,

2006 as part of the project's clearance process which flagrantly violate, in letter and spirit, the individual and collective rights given to tribal communities by Parliament.

"Now I am writing to you since the project, which is essentially a commercial venture and is facing growing public criticism because of the ecological damage it will cause, is being sought to be justified by the Government of India supposedly on overriding security considerations," he said in his letter to Singh.

"Let me straightaway say that there can be no two opinions on the need to strengthen our nation's defences. There can also be no two opinions on the need to project India's strategic capabilities in a credible manner," he said.

"Even so, I submit the following for your consideration. First, INS Baaz located in Campbell Bay on the Great Nicobar Island was commissioned in July 2012. But plans for at least tre-

bling the length of the existing runway and making a naval jetty have been awaiting approval for almost five years. These plans have far less adverse environmental impacts as well," Ramesh suggested.

Secondly, he said, there are also assets of the Andaman and Nicobar Command created many years ago that could be expanded with far less environmental costs.

"These include INS Kardip, INS Kohassa, INS Utkrosh, INS Jarawa & the Car Nicobar Air Force Station.

"Third, the transshipment port and the township that are an essential part of the Great Nicobar Island Project do not enhance our country's military capability in any way. Yet, now that suddenly has emerged as a major justification for them," the Congress leader said.

"Finally, I wish to reiterate that the Great Nicobar Island Project in its present shape and form is a recipe for ecological disaster.



Recent strike footage attributed to Hezbollah confirms a narrow but decisive shift in drone warfare. Fiber-optic guided, low-altitude attack UAVs are being deployed to bypass electronic defences. This is not a broad technological leap. It is a focused adaptation to a known vulnerability, and its implications are expanding across every active conflict zone.

What Is Actually New

The platform is not new. The configuration is.

Three elements define the shift:

Fiber-optic tether guidance replacing radio links

Extremely low-altitude flight profiles

Direct operator-controlled targeting

The operational outcome is clear:

CHEAP DRONES, COSTLY GAPS: A PRECISE SHIFT IN MODERN WARFARE

Immunity to jamming and electronic warfare

Reduced radar detectability

High precision against fixed and semi-mobile targets

These systems do not rely on autonomy or advanced sensors. Their advantage lies in eliminating interception options rather than improving capability.

The Cost Equation

The defining feature of this shift is economic.

Interceptor systems are expensive, finite, and slow to replenish

Attack drones are cheap, expendable, and rapidly produced

This creates a structural imbalance. A single low-cost drone penetrating defences can destroy high-value infrastructure. The defender is

forced into repeated high-cost engagements against low-cost threats. Over time, this becomes unsustainable.

The attacker does not require high success rates. Only consistent pressure.

Evidence Across Conflicts

This pattern is already visible across multiple theatres shaped by ongoing global unrest:

In the Russia-Ukraine War, FPV drones have transformed tactical warfare, making concealment temporary and exposure constant

Iran has demonstrated the long-term value of mass-produced drones, using volume to overwhelm advanced systems

Israel continues to face evolving

aerial threats that exploit gaps in layered defence networks

The conclusion is consistent. Cheap systems are not replacing advanced weapons. They are undermining them.

The Manufacturing Shift

The response is now industrial.

Turkey has built a global position through affordable, combat-proven UAV exports

India is accelerating domestic drone production and counter-UAV systems to reduce dependence

Russia and Ukraine are iterating designs at battlefield speed, often within weeks

The shift is from technological superiority to production capacity and speed.

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infrastructure targets

3. Lower barrier to entry

Non-state actors gain access to precision strike capability

4. Limits of electronic warfare

Fiber-optic guidance removes reliance on signals, reducing effectiveness of jamming

Editorial Assessment

This is a precision disruption.

Cheap drones will not replace advanced military platforms. They will reduce their effectiveness by targeting their weaknesses. The margin of safety that expensive systems depend on is narrowing.

Defence structures will have to adapt:

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Sanatan: Tradition Loudly Possessed, Quietly Unread

By Acharya Prashant

The word "Sanatan" means eternal. It is now among the most fiercely contested words in Indian public life, invoked often to denounce, defend or mobilise with an urgency that might suggest the arguers have some acquaintance with the tradition the word names. The urgency disguises a near-universal absence of that acquaintance. This is the characteristic condition of a tradition that has survived for several millennia: its label is loudly possessed while its philosophical core is quietly unread. A label offers identity without the cost of inquiry; the tradition's core offers inquiry without the comfort of a pre-settled identity. These are incompatible offers, and the parties who fight most loudly over the label are, on both sides of every recurring controversy, determined to take the first and avoid the second.

When Udayanidhi Stalin declared in 2023 that Sanatan Dharma was like dengue, malaria, and the coronavirus, that it could not merely be opposed but had to be eradicated, and then renewed the substance of those remarks more recently, the response played out with perfect predictability. Defenders massed on one flank, critics on the other, and the noise between them was considerable. What the noise did not contain was any careful examination of the thing being argued about. The straw man, in which one constructs a distorted image of an opponent's position and directs the criticism at the distortion, was not the property of one side alone. Critics attacked a version of Sanatan Dharma that

bears little resemblance to what the term philosophically denotes. Defenders rushed to protect a version of Sanatan Dharma they have largely never read. In the middle, the actual philosophical tradition sat untouched by either party, as irrelevant to the noise as a library to a riot outside its doors.

The critics have genuine grievances that must be acknowledged without evasion. Caste discrimination, patriarchy, the ritual exploitation of the vulnerable, the sanctification of social hierarchy in the language of the sacred: these are real, documented, and still operative. Tamil Nadu's history with precisely these abuses is not contested, and Periyar's long campaign against them represents one of modern India's more serious engagements with social oppression. His visit to Kashi, where he witnessed the conditions around the ghats and was then turned away from a feeding hall for not being a Brahmin, his years of questioning at Vaishnava religious gatherings as a young man, his decades of work against the abuse of caste authority: none of this is mythology. When a politician from that tradition objects to the spread of practices that historically served to brutalise the vulnerable, the objection carries genuine moral force. The criticism arrives from lived experience, not from ignorance of it.

Warranted indignation, however, is not the same as accurate targeting, and accurate targeting requires knowing what one is targeting. The social evils that animated Periyar did not arise from the philosophical core of the tradition called Sanatan Dharma. They arose from the ego's

characteristic capacity to commandeer any available language in service of exploitation. The animal within man, to use a formulation that appears in this tradition's own diagnostic vocabulary, does not abandon its predatory instincts when it acquires the vocabulary of the sacred; it puts that vocabulary to use. The intention to exploit finds its cover in the language of religiosity, and thereafter the two are fused in public perception, so that attacking the exploitation feels like attacking the religion, and defending the religion feels like defending the exploitation. Both responses are mistaken, because the exploiter and the tradition the exploiter has hijacked are not the same thing.

If an unqualified practitioner causes harm in the name of medicine, that harm does not condemn the entire field; it condemns the practitioner's departure from it. To use the malpractice as evidence that medicine itself must be eradicated is to punish the discipline for the quack's crimes while leaving the quack untouched. This is precisely the structure of the argument against Sanatan Dharma. The social evils attributed to it were committed in its name, not in its spirit; to dispose of the tradition on this basis is to discard the antidote because the poison was administered in the same bottle. The objection survives, of course, that if almost no one practices the antidote and the poison is what fills the bottles in actual circulation, the practical force of pointing to the antidote is limited. The honest answer is that the antidote is on the shelves where it has always been, untouched precisely because the

work it demands is more difficult than the consolations of the poison. That untouched availability does not justify the poison; it indicts those who never opened the bottle.

What, then, does Sanatan Dharma actually mean? The answer lies in the tradition's own language. The root "dharma" denotes that which is worth carrying, the fundamental obligation that one owes to one's own existence. "Sanatan" denotes that which holds true irrespective of time, place, or circumstance. Together they name the obligation that is always operative. What in human experience qualifies as eternal in this sense? Ritual varies by village, belief varies by century, custom varies by caste and region and generation, all of these being local and contingent rather than eternal. What remains constant across all times, geographies, economic conditions, genders, and religious affiliations is the inner human condition: the restlessness, the fear, the greed, the bondage to desire and habit, the persistent registration that something is wrong within, that something essential is missing, that the ordinary strategies of accumulation and belonging have not and will not resolve the ache at the centre. This condition is neither Indian nor Hindu nor traceable to any particular scripture or founder. Every human being who has ever lived has inhabited it, whether in ancient Taxila or contemporary Tokyo. It does not abate with wealth or education or religious affiliation. It belongs, as the tradition itself diagnoses, to the structure of the ego that has not yet turned to look at itself.

IPL 2026: RCB seal playoff berth with 23-run victory against Punjab Kings

DHARAMSHALA

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) became the first team to qualify for the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 playoffs after defeating Punjab Kings by 23 runs in a high-scoring contest at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium on Sunday.

Defending a massive total of 222/4, RCB produced a disciplined bowling effort led by Rasikh Salam Dar, who claimed three wickets, to restrict Punjab Kings to 199/8 despite a fighting half-century from Shashank Singh. The victory helped RCB move to 18 points from 13 matches and secure a place in the playoffs.

Punjab Kings endured a disastrous start to the chase as Bhuvneshwar Kumar removed Priyansh Arya for a duck in the opening over. The experienced pacer struck again in his next over when Prabhsimran Singh edged a good-length delivery to first slip after scoring just two runs.

RCB tightened their grip further when impact substitute Rasikh Salam Dar dismissed Punjab Kings skipper Shreyas Iyer for one.

With wickets falling around him, Cooper Connolly launched a counterattack alongside Suryansh Shedge. Shedge took on Josh Hazlewood with a boundary and a six, while Connolly attacked Rasikh to help Punjab Kings recover to 49/3 at the end of the Power-play.

Connolly continued to play aggressively before Romario Shepherd provided the breakthrough in the eighth over. Attempting another big shot, Connolly was caught at deep square leg after scoring 37 off 22 balls, including three fours and three



sixes.

Shedge then stitched together a useful partnership with Marcus Stoinis as the pair rebuilt the innings with regular boundaries and sensible strike rotation. However, RCB struck again when Virat Kohli completed a sharp catch at long-off to dismiss Shedge for 35 off 22 deliveries.

Punjab Kings still had hope with Stoinis at one end and Shashank Singh launching an aggressive assault at the other. Shashank changed the momentum of the chase by smashing three sixes in an over off Suyash Sharma before adding more boundaries to keep the required run rate under control.

Stoinis also shifted gears and struck consecutive boundaries against Rasikh as Punjab Kings reached 146/5 after 15 overs, needing 77 runs from the final five overs.

Shashank continued to fight hard and produced a stunning helicopter shot against Bhuvneshwar

Kumar as the chase remained alive. However, Hazlewood delivered a crucial breakthrough in the 17th over by trapping Stoinis lbw for 37 off 25 balls.

Despite losing his partner, Shashank kept attacking and completed a rapid half-century in just 22 balls. But with little support from the other end, the required rate continued to climb.

RCB finally sealed the match in the final over when Rasikh dismissed Shashank, who was caught at long-on after a superb knock of 56 off 27 deliveries, featuring four boundaries and four sixes. Rasikh then picked up another wicket on the final ball as the Punjab Kings finished at 199/8.

Earlier, RCB posted 222/4 riding on an unbeaten 73 from Venkatesh Iyer and Virat Kohli's 58. Devdutt Padikkal also made an important contribution with a quickfire 45.

Asked to bat first, RCB managed only 17 runs in the first two overs as

Kohli and Jacob Bethell took time to adjust to the conditions. Bethell struggled for timing and was eventually bowled by Harpreet Brar for 11 off seven balls.

Padikkal then shifted the momentum immediately by hitting a six off his first delivery. Kohli also joined the attack as the duo mixed aggressive strokeplay with smart strike rotation to keep the scoreboard moving quickly. Their partnership helped RCB reach 61/1 at the end of the Power-play.

Punjab Kings introduced Yuzvendra Chahal to slow the scoring rate, but the leg-spinner conceded 21 runs in his opening over. Kohli and Padikkal added 76 runs for the second wicket before Brar struck again, dismissing Padikkal for an entertaining 45 off 25 balls, including four boundaries and three sixes.

Kohli continued to dominate and completed his fifty in just 31 deliveries. He later fell for 58 off 37 balls after being caught at deep mid-wicket off Chahal.

Venkatesh Iyer then took charge in the death overs. After a slow start, he accelerated brilliantly and completed his fifty off 29 balls. The left-hander remained unbeaten on 73 off 40 deliveries, smashing eight fours and four sixes. Tim David provided late support with a quick 28 off 12 balls as RCB crossed the 220-run mark.

Brief scores:

Royal Challengers Bengaluru 222/4 in 20 overs (Venkatesh Iyer 73*, Virat Kohli 58, Devdutt Padikkal 45; Harpreet Brar 2-35, Yuzvendra Chahal 1-42) beat Punjab Kings 199/8 in 20 overs (Shashank Singh 56, Cooper Connolly 37, Suryansh Shedge 35; Rasikh Salam Dar 3-36, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 2-38) by 23 runs.

IPL 2026: We still want to show what we can do on the field as a group, says DC's Starc

NEW DELHI

Delhi Capitals left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc said the side remains determined to showcase its collective strength in the final stretch of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 league stage, even as the race to the playoffs tightens.

DC are at eighth spot with 10 points from 12 games and have a slim chance to enter the playoffs if they win their remaining two league stage games, including the clash against Rajasthan Royals at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi on Sunday.

"I mean, as each day goes past, we get a bit more percentage of a chance of getting through, and the way the game is going at the moment, it is good for us. So, I mean, we've still got two games. We still want to show what we can do on the field here as a group.

"There's been a little bit of change over the last couple of games, and if that may happen again tonight and in the next game, that's it, but it's a chance for the guys to



show what they can do. For the guys who have been going well, you look at KL, who has had a fantastic season with the bat, and a few guys who have come in and taken their opportunities.

"So, there's still plenty to play for, and it's still a great chance for these two games to perform if you come in, and as a group, you know,

you never know what can happen in cricket," said Starc in a pre-match chat with the broadcasters.

Starc also emphasised adaptability as the key factor for DC to do well at their home venue. "Obviously, we've played them away maybe a week... or a couple of weeks ago, actually. So, I think it is probably two

teams that know each other. Then it comes down to these conditions. Here in Delhi, they've changed the game on game.

"So, I think that's going to be the key tonight, is adapting to what's presented to us on this wicket, which is a little bit of an unknown. Your guess is as good as mine. But, if you can adjust as quickly as you can, the team that's going to do that the quickest generally takes the advantage in the game."

Asked what DC did after winning over Punjab Kings in Dharamshala, Starc said, "It's been a little bit of a break. We've got another one after tonight, so it's been a chance for I think a couple of guys to duck home for a night.

"I've noticed there's been a little bit of golf. For me, I've just been watching the golf and the footy back home, just getting the old body right for tonight. So, no, it's been a little refresher, and hopefully we're good to go tonight," he said.

RR pacer Jofra Archer, meanwhile, spoke about RR's longish break in their

last two matches. "We had a few team bonding sessions as well, and the gap, the first gap, they just let us do whatever we wanted to do on those few days. We had some pool volleyball. We had a MasterChef. And we had a really nice dinner, actually, at one of the really historic places in Rajasthan."

On his bowling approach, Archer remarked, "Well, nothing specifically. You just got to run in every day and just try to hit that good area. You know, some days it's gonna work for you. Some days it won't. And the days that it doesn't, you just got to hold the faith."

RR also needs to win their remaining three games to enter the playoffs, and Archer said the tournament is still wide open for anyone to enter the last four stage. "Not just DC, but I think every team in the competition. It doesn't matter where they are in the table. Anybody can beat anybody. Didn't have GT losing on my radar last night either. And that kind of just shows that you can't take anyone for granted in this tournament."

BJP raking up communal divides to disturb peace of Jammu Region: Rattan



**SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU**

The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Provincial President Jammu, Rattan Lal Gupta, on Saturday lashed out at the BJP for what he termed as a "deliberate and dangerous campaign" to vitiate the peaceful atmosphere in Jammu region by raking up communal divisions to destabilise the elected government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

While interacting a deputation from Sidhra and Rangura headed by Ch. Rehmat Ali former BDC Chairman and Shama Akther former Corporator at party's provincial headquarter, Sher-e-Kashmir Bhawan Jammu, Gupta said the BJP, having been politically rejected

by the people and sensing its rapidly shrinking ground in Jammu and Kashmir, has resorted to "communal polarisation, misinformation and fear-mongering" to stay politically relevant.

"The BJP cannot digest the growing popularity and people-centric governance of the Omar Abdullah-led government. Frustrated by its political isolation, the party is now attempting to divide society on communal lines and disrupt the peace and progress being witnessed across Jammu and Kashmir," Gupta said.

He urged the Lieutenant Governor's administration to take serious note of the "systematic propaganda and mischief" being spread by BJP leaders and their affiliates. "Since law and order, police and home affairs directly fall under the LG administration, it becomes its constitutional responsibility to curb such divisive politics that undermine the secular and pluralistic ethos of the country, particularly Jammu and Kashmir," he added.

Gupta said no amount of BJP's "communal theatrics and propaganda" can derail the developmental momentum and welfare initiatives being undertaken by the Omar Abdullah government, as people are firmly standing with the National Conference.

"The National Conference

will never allow the BJP to fulfil its malicious agenda of dividing people for electoral gains. The people of Jammu and Kashmir know who sacrificed lives for the unity, dignity and harmony of this country. They remember the contributions and sacrifices of National Conference leaders, workers and ministers through decades of turmoil," he said.

Highlighting the government's performance, Gupta said people have witnessed how Omar Abdullah and his cabinet remained on the ground during last year's flash floods and other emergencies, ensuring relief and support to affected families. "People can clearly see the difference between a government that works for the people and a party that survives only on hatred, division and hollow slogans," he remarked.

Mr Gupta assured the deputation that National Conference is fully supported the genuine cause and also brought to the notice of concerned authorities to deal with such mischievous Mongers.

He further said the BJP failed to deliver on employment, economic growth and public welfare during its 11 years long stint in power and is now trying to divert attention from its failures by creating communal tensions. "The people are politically mature and will not fall prey to the BJP's divisive designs," Gupta asserted.

BGSBU accelerates infrastructure push; VC, Registrar review major Campus Projects RAJOURI

In a major step towards strengthening institutional infrastructure and enhancing the academic environment, Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University intensified its campus development initiatives as Vice Chancellor Prof. Jawaid Iqbal and Registrar Ravi Kumar Sihag conducted an extensive inspection of various ongoing developmental projects across the university campus.

During the visit, the university leadership reviewed the pace and quality of work on several key infrastructure projects currently under construction and nearing completion. The inspection covered the newly constructed university gate, staff quarters, academic block, and indoor stadium, besides several other upgradation initiatives aimed at strengthening academic, residential, and sports facilities within the campus. The Vice Chancellor and Registrar interacted with engineers, executing agencies, and concerned officials, directing them to ensure timely completion of all projects while maintaining prescribed quality standards and specifications.

Emphasising the importance of modern infrastructure in higher education, Prof. Jawaid Iqbal stated that the university remains committed to creating student-friendly facilities in line with contemporary academic requirements. He stressed that all developmental works must be completed within stipulated timelines so that students, scholars, and faculty members can benefit from improved infrastructure at the earliest.

Registrar Ravi Kumar Sihag also reviewed the execution process and underscored the need for effective coordination among departments for the smooth implementation of projects. He observed that infrastructural development plays a crucial role in the academic growth and overall institutional advancement of the university.

The visit reflects the proactive approach of the university administration towards accelerating developmental activities and strengthening the institutional framework of Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University for the larger benefit of the academic community and society.

Grand Kalash Yatra marks beginning of nine-day 'Anand Ramayan Katha' RAJOURI

A spiritually vibrant atmosphere engulfed Rajouri town as a grand Kalash Yatra was taken out with immense religious fervour and enthusiasm to mark the commencement of the nine-day Shri "Anand Ramayan Tatva Gyan Yagya Katha" at SVS Gyan Ganga Ashram, Rajouri. The religious procession, organised in connection with the upcoming Ganga Dussehra celebrations scheduled for May 25, commenced from Sanatan Dharma Sabha Mandir under the leadership of His Holiness Atal Pethadeshwar Rajguru Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Shri Shri 1008 Shri Swami Vishwatmanand Saraswati Ji Maharaj. Hundreds of devotees from different parts of the country and Jammu & Kashmir participated in the yatra with deep devotion and spiritual zeal.

Devotees from Sunderbani, Nowshera, Kalakote, Dhangri, Jammu and several other areas joined the procession, chanting bhajans in praise of Lord Shri Ram while traditional drums and devotional performances added to the festive atmosphere throughout the route. The yatra passed through key locations of Rajouri town including Raghunath Bazaar, City Chowk, Moti Bazaar and Old Bus Stand before culminating at SVS Gyan Ganga Ashram, where members of the Ashram Committee accorded a warm welcome to Swamiji and devotees by showering flower petals. Prashad was later distributed among the participants.

Speaking on the occasion, Pt. Ashwani Sharma, Founder Member of SVS Ashram Committee Rajouri, said that the Shri Anand Ramayan Katha would continue from May 16 to May 24 and conclude with a grand Bhandara. He further informed that a Virat Sant Sammelan would also be organised on May 25, witnessing participation of prominent saints and Mahamandaleshwars from different parts of the country. Addressing the gathering during the inaugural discourse, Shri Swami Vishwatmanand Saraswati Ji Maharaj highlighted the spiritual and social significance of Ramayana in human life. He said the teachings of Ramayana guide humanity towards self-realisation and moral values while purifying societal thought.

Natrang launches its ambitious mission, 'Theatre for Schools'

**SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU**

Marking the completion of its eventful 43-year journey, Natrang launched its ambitious mission, 'Theatre for Schools', with the powerful staging of its internationally acclaimed play Aap Hamaare Hain Kaun written and directed by Balwant Thakur at Abhinav Theatre. The initiative aims to introduce theatre in schools in a highly professional and transformative manner, enabling students to experience the immense educational and emotional potential of performing arts.

As part of this pioneering initiative, leading educational institutions from across the region were invited to witness the performance so that teachers and young students could directly experience the power of theatre. Schools that participated in this landmark programme included DPS Jammu, Nagbani; KC Public School; Jammu Sanskriti School; KC International School; Scientia International School; Shri Ram Universal School; India Kids Udhampur; IDPS Ghoumanhasan; MIER; Luthra Public School; and Tiny Tots Higher Secondary School.

At the outset, the visionary behind this initiative, Balwant Thakur, spoke in detail about the transformative power of theatre and its ability to shape personalities, build confidence, enhance communication skills, and nurture creativity among children. Having worked extensively in more than 100 international cities and spent over four



decades engaging with children's theatre in India and abroad, Balwant Thakur shared that, together with his colleagues Neeraj Kant and Sumeet Sharma, he has evolved a completely new methodology of theatre training for children.

He emphasized that theatre should not remain merely a word-centric classroom activity but should become a dynamic process of experiential learning capable of transforming young minds. To demonstrate this innovative training process, Natrang presented Aap Hamaare Hain Kaun, a production specially developed through this new methodology. The emotionally engaging and artistically rich performance left a deep impact on the audience, especially the students and teachers who witnessed the show.

The presentation proved that theatre is not merely entertainment but a powerful educational tool that inspires sensitivity, imagination, discipline, teamwork, and self-expression. The overwhelming response from participating schools reflected a growing realization that theatre

can play a vital role in holistic education. With the launch of 'Theatre for Schools', Natrang has taken a historic step towards creating a culturally vibrant and creatively empowered generation, reaffirming its commitment to meaningful theatre and social transformation through the arts. The show was brilliantly anchored by Gauri Thakur and those who thrilled everyone with their mind blowing performance included Aaradhya Thakur, Rishaan Marhatta, Ruhaan Chandan, Dwijesh Dutta, Kavish Sharma, Advik Sharma, Sachetas Anand, Supria Gorka, Samaeira Raina, Anmol Sharma, Mahira Gupta, Aadhwika Gupta, Priyal Ashok Gupta, Mehak Chib, Araiya Shan, Aanandita Dutt and Aarohi Singh.

The show was managed by Mohd. Yaseen, Pawan Verma, Kananpreet Kaur, Muskan Thakur, Isha Sharma, Radhika Khajuria, Kushal Bhat, Aadesh Dhar, Mahikshit Singh and Akash Wadhwan. Sumeet Sharma the head of children wing of Natrang presented the vote of thanks.

JKNPP (Bhim) Constitutes Migrant Action Committee in Talwara to Champion the Cause of Jammu Migrants



JAMMU

Reaffirming its unwavering commitment to the rights and welfare of displaced families, the J&K National Panthers Party (Bhim) has officially constituted the Migrants Action Committee, Talwara, located in District Reasi. This newly formed committee has been established specifically to look after and address the pressing issues concerning the migrants from Jammu Province.

The struggle for the fundamental rights and dignity of Jammu migrants has long been the cornerstone of the party's

mission, a legacy pioneered by the late Prof. Bhim Singh. Prof. Singh dedicated a significant portion of his life to this cause, fighting relentlessly for the displaced communities by filing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the Supreme Court of India. Through his legal and political advocacy, he successfully secured a historic judgment that granted relief to Jammu migrants equal to the relief provided to Kashmiri migrants, ensuring parity and justice for the displaced families of the Jammu region.

Announcing the newly formed committee, Vilakshan

Singh, President of JKNPP (Bhim), issued a strong reassurance to the displaced communities.

He assured the Jammu migrants that even after the sad demise of Prof. Bhim Singh, the party's resolve remains unshaken. Vilakshan Singh emphasized that the Panthers Party Bhim will not abandon the cause and will continue to fight fiercely for their rights, welfare, and equitable treatment without compromise.

The Migrants Action Committee comprises a dedicated leadership team ready to take this crucial mission forward. The main position holders appointed to lead the committee include Balwan Singh (State General Secy. JKNPP Bhim), who will serve as Chairman, alongside another Balwan Singh (District President Reasi) shall be Vice Chairman of the Committee. Ravinder Singh has been appointed as the President of the Committee, with Baldev Singh taking up the responsibility of Vice President. Additionally, Kartar Singh assumes the role of Secretary, and Samitra Devi has been named President of the Women Cell.

IEI Jammu Centre Celebrates World Telecommunication & Information Society Day

JAMMU

The Institution of Engineers (India), Jammu Centre celebrated World Telecommunication & Information Society Day on 17th May, 2026 with the theme "Digital Lifelines-Strengthening Resilience in Connected World". The event was attended by Engineers from various Departments, Organizations and Senior Engineers along with Members of the Committee of IEI, Jammu Centre.

Dr. Piyush Singla, IAS, Secretary to the Government, IT Department, J&K Govt. graced the occasion as Chief Guest, Sh. Ajay Khajuria, Professor-of-Practice, MIET, Jammu, Advisor-KPMG; Former Marketing Head-Bharti Airtel, J&K was the Keynote Speakers. Er. Anil Verma, FIE Chairman, IEI, Jammu Centre presided over the function.

Er. Anil Verma, FIE; Chairman in his Welcome Address touched the pros & cons of the present days Digital Lifelines. While glorifying their versatility, he lamented that although the ecosystem of present times is quite enabling but it is equally mind disabling. The Artificial Intelligence has completely enslaved the humans and has halted their thinking & innovative capabilities. He requested all the stakeholders to work in tandem to develop mechanisms to strengthen resilience in breaking this technological inertia of human minds. This will go a long way in checking the self-imposed inrush of digital euphoria in the World. He also emphasized that professionals should develop



such systems which strengthen the cyber security network of our nation.

Sh. Ajay Khajuria, Keynote Speaker dwelt at length about the importance of connectivity in the present day's World's and informed that 95% of the internet connectivity in the World is through submarine cables and resilience needs to be built to safeguard them to stay connected. He suggested multiple fibre routes, backup power systems to sustain uptime and graphically separated sites of Data Centres for resilience. He concluded that when networks stay strong, societies stay strong.

During the seminar Er. B. L. Rawal, FIE; Er. Gopal Krishan Sharma, FIE; Er. Ranjeev Sawhney, MIE & Er. Joy Ganjoo, AM Technologist also presented their papers on the theme.

The speakers advocated for telecom as "Essential Service" with no complete shutdowns and establishment of separate CERT for J&K. They also asked for safeguarding the digital systems from floods and other such nature's furies. They also

stressed that Digital resilience is now a public safety requirement and all the concerned need to work in the direction for ensuring that this becomes a reality.

The Chief Guest deliberated about various initiatives being undertaken by the government under Digital and technological driven administration and development of resilient digital infrastructure. He advised everyone to use data with diligence keeping in mind cyber hygiene. He also informed the house that J&K State Data Centre is now ISO Certified and our applications are one of the best in the World. He highlighted the initiatives being taken up by the government under e-governance, online citizen services, development of digital public platforms, e-office implementations, cyber security initiatives and transparent digital administration.

Er. Avneet Gupta, MIE, Honorary Secretary, IEI Jammu Local Centre presented the Vote of Thanks to the august gathering and media personnel for active participation.

Shiv Sena (UBT) Demands Protection for Apple Industry, Free Electricity and Land for Poor Families

KULGAM

Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) Jammu and Kashmir unit on Saturday demanded protection for the apple industry and local businesses, allotment of five-marla plots to landless families and free electricity for residents during a public rally in Kulgam district.

Addressing a gathering at Cholgam village, the party's J&K chief Manish Sahni said Kashmir's traditional economy was facing a serious crisis and apple growers, traders and farmers associated with horticulture and handicrafts were under economic pressure.

He said apple growers were struggling due to rising production costs, low market prices, transportation issues and lack of adequate government support.

Sahni demanded a special economic package for apple growers and local industries, besides marketing support, cold storage facilities and easy loan schemes for farmers and youth.

He also called for setting up laboratories to check fake pesticides and sprays used in horticulture.

Claiming that several villages in Kulgam and adjoining areas still lacked basic infrastructure, Sahni said people were facing problems related to roads, healthcare, drinking water, education and employment.

The Shiv Sena leader also opposed the smart meter system and rising electricity bills, terming them an "economic burden" on the public.

"Jammu and Kashmir produces electricity on a large scale, yet people here are suffering due to high electricity bills and power shortages," he said while demanding free electricity for residents.

Sahni further demanded speedy implementation of the five-marla land allotment scheme for landless poor families, labourers, widows and economically weaker sections.

During the rally, slogans were raised in support of farmers, free electricity and rights of landless families.

Party leaders claimed that around 100 local residents joined Shiv Sena (UBT) during the event in the presence of district president Mohammad Ashraf.

Several party leaders and workers including Sanjay Bhatt, Raj Singh, Balwant Singh, Raju Kapoor, Aditya Mahajan, Shashipal, Farooq Ahmad Khan, Umar Yaqoob, Mushtaq Ahmad, Irshad Ahmad Khan, Sudarshan Singh, Abida Begum, Sumaiyera Begum and Naseer Ahmad were present on the occasion.

Koul calls for ideologically committed cadre at Prashikshan Mahabhiyan in Nowshera

NOWSHERA

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) General Secretary (Organization), Ashok Koul, addressed the District Level Training Camp organized under the "Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Prashikshan Mahabhiyan-2026" by BJP District Nowshera on the topic "Vichar Parivar." BJP National Executive Member Ravinder Raina, BJP District President Nowshera Pritam Sharma, and Kalakote-Sundarbani MLA Thakur Randhir Singh, senior party leaders, office bearers, and executive members from the district participated in the sessions.

Ashok Koul, addressing the training camp, emphasized that ideological clarity and organizational discipline are the strongest pillars of the BJP. He said that the objective of the Prashikshan Mahabhiyan is not only to strengthen party structure but also to ideologically empower every activist so that they can effectively work for the nation and society with dedication and commitment.

Explaining the concept of "Vichar Parivar," Ashok Koul said that it represents a collective family of nationalist and socially committed organizations working with a common vision of nation-building, cultural preservation, social harmony, and public welfare. He stated that various organizations associated with the Vichar Parivar work in different sectors of society, including education, social service, labour welfare, tribal upliftment, youth development, women empowerment, and rural advancement, but all remain connected through the common ideology of nationalism and service to humanity.

Koul further said that coordinated efforts among these organizations have played a significant role in building a strong, self-reliant, and prosperous India. He urged party workers to strengthen their ideological understanding, maintain close contact with the people, and work with a spirit of selfless service for the welfare of every section of society. Other leaders also highlighted the importance of regular training programmes in creating disciplined, dedicated, and ideologically committed workers capable of effectively communicating the vision and policies of the BJP among the masses.

More women, freshers migrating for better blue, grey-collar jobs: Report



MUMBAI

More women and freshers among the country's blue- and grey-collar workforce are moving beyond their hometowns for better jobs and higher pay, driving a 31.4 per cent year-on-year rise in job-related migration during January-April 2026, according to a report.

A report by blue and grey-collar recruitment platform WorkIndia points to a defining moment in India's labour story, more women, more freshers, and more workers from across the country's blue and grey-collar workforce are looking beyond their home cities for better jobs, better wages, and better futures.

The data shows 8.6 million job applications for cities other than applicants' own between January and April 2026, up from 6.5 million in the same period a year ago – a 31.4 per cent year-on-year increase.

This far outpaces the 20.2 per cent growth in same-city applications, meaning the cross-city worker pool is now expanding more than 1.5 times faster than the local one, the

report revealed.

As a result, nearly 1 in 4 workers on the platform (24.1 per cent) is now actively pursuing opportunities outside their home city, compared to 22.5 per cent a year ago, it added.

The WorkIndia report is based on over 35 million job applications between January and April 2026 on the company's platform.

The report found that, for a sector long defined by male-dominated migration, the data point to a meaningful shift, with women in blue- and grey-collar roles increasingly willing to leave their home cities for better opportunities, narrowing a gender gap in workforce mobility that has persisted for decades.

Freshers' or first-time job seekers' cross-city application rate climbed 11 per cent compared to a far softer 5 per cent increase among experienced workers.

Across blue- and grey-collar segments, roles such as labour, office work, sales, and healthcare saw more workers willing to move to other cities this year, reflecting a workforce that no longer treats migration as a last

resort but as a deliberate path to better wages and working conditions.

High-volume mobility segments such as manufacturing, delivery and driver, automobile, and domestic work continue to contribute the bulk of cross-city application volume, even as their migration shares stabilise after years of rapid growth, it stated.

With the overall candidate pool itself expanding 22.7 per cent year-on-year, the absolute number of blue-collar workers crossing city lines has grown substantially in every one of these categories, even where the relative share has held steady.

Meanwhile, the report said geographically, opportunity continued to spread beyond the traditional metros.

Tier II hubs are absorbing rising volumes of incoming applications as employers in cities like Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Coimbatore, Indore, and Lucknow scale up hiring, and as workers respond to wage gaps, housing costs, and quality-of-life considerations that are reshaping the country's economic geography.

"The Indian blue and grey-collar workforce is rewriting the rules of mobility. A woman in Patna applying for a healthcare role in Pune, a fresher in Bhopal applying for an office job in Bengaluru, a salesperson in Surat looking at openings in Hyderabad, this is the new normal. "Migration has stopped being a male, metro-bound, last-resort decision. It is now a deliberate career choice being made by millions of Indians, including a fast-growing share of women and first-time job seekers," WorkIndia co-founder and CEO Nilesh Dungarwal added. (

Loans likely to cross Rs 1 lakh cr milestone in FY27: IRFC CMD

NEW DELHI

State-owned Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) has set a target of crossing a milestone of Rs 1 lakh crore loan sanction during the current financial year.

To fund its business growth, the public sector undertaking (PSU) of the Ministry of Railways is looking to raise Rs 70,000 crore, including from overseas in FY27.

"We are aiming for a loan sanction of Rs 1 lakh crore and disbursement of about Rs 40,000 crore during the ongoing financial year, as the pipeline of high-quality infrastructure projects looks strong," IRFC Chairman and Managing Director Manoj Kumar Dubey told PTI.

A steady pipeline and emerging opportunities in sectors such as metro and ports are expected to further accelerate growth in the coming financial year, following its whole-of-government approach, he said.

During FY26, IRFC sanctioned projects worth Rs 72,949 crore and disbursed approximately Rs 35,067 crore, exceeding its annual guidance.

The company, which last year got Navratna status, witnessed its net worth raising to all-time high at Rs 56,748 crore and AUM crossing a record high at Rs 4.85 lakh crore.

The diversification-led expansion resulted in improved spreads and a consistent rise in net interest margin (NIM), while IRFC maintained its zero NPA status.

"Our diversification strategy is now translating into stronger spreads, improved margins and enhanced shareholder value, he said, adding that NIM should further improve to 1.65 per cent in FY27 as against 1.5 per cent recorded in FY26.

He further said IRFC made a structural shift in business model, from a traditional railway financier to a diversified infrastructure financing institution keeping railways at its Centre.

With Indian Railways not availing fresh disbursements since 2023-24, the company has expanded into sectors with strong forward and backward linkages to railways, including power generation, renewable energy, transmission, fertilisers and railway-linked infrastructure.

For the financial year ended March 31, 2026, IRFC reported its highest-ever profit of Rs 7,009 crore, compared to Rs 6,502 crore in 2024-25, registering a growth of 7.8 per cent.

The company's total assets crossed the landmark milestone of Rs 5 lakh crore for the first time in FY26.

India's Rs 1.7 lakh crore fuel crisis may have found an unlikely fix – water

NEW DELHI

As India battles soaring energy import costs and a weakening rupee amid global oil turmoil, a Monaco-based fuel technology company says it may have found an answer hiding in plain sight: water.

FOWE Eco Solutions, through its patented Cavitech fuel emulsion technology, claims industries can slash fuel consumption by up to 10 per cent, reduce harmful emissions dramatically, and improve equipment performance — all without modifying engines or shutting plants down.

The pitch comes at a critical time for India. The country imports nearly 88 per cent of its crude oil needs, while state-run oil firms are reportedly bleeding Rs 1,000 crore a day to shield consumers from global price shocks. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also publicly urged industries to conserve fuel as a national economic priority.

Now, FOWE says its technology can do exactly that.

At the heart of the system



is a fuel-oil-water emulsion created using Controlled Cavitation Technology (CCT), which disperses microscopic water droplets inside fuel oil without using chemical additives, says its COO Hemant Sondhi.

When burned, those droplets trigger 'microexplosions' inside combustion chambers, shattering fuel into ultra-fine particles that burn more completely and efficiently.

The result, according to the company and independent test data, is lower fuel consumption, cleaner combustion, and sharply reduced emissions.

Sondhi said independent testing at Alfa Laval's Denmark facility showed fuel savings of 6.3 per cent in boilers and 8.7 per cent in marine engines. Ship trials on Scorpio Tankers vessels demonstrated bunker fuel savings of around 10 per

cent, while Indian refinery and steel plant trials recorded fuel savings ranging from 3.6 per cent to 6 per cent.

What makes the technology particularly attractive for India's energy-intensive sectors is that it does not require engine modification, hardware retrofit, or installation shutdown.

FOWE says its cavitation process also reduces the viscosity of heavy fuel oil without expensive cutter stock or

chemical flow improvers — potentially freeing up higher-value diesel for sale while lowering pumping and heating costs.

The company claims the technology can also reduce NOx emissions by around 30 per cent, SOx emissions by nearly 40 per cent and particulate matter to near-zero levels.

It also says the process lowers fouling inside boilers and furnaces, extending maintenance intervals and reducing shutdown frequency.

FOWE has already conducted trials across Indian refineries, steel plants, power units, and industrial furnaces.

A recent steel plant trial reported a 5 per cent reduction in furnace fuel consumption alongside a 40 per cent cut in harmful emissions. IOC's Haldia refinery trial reportedly confirmed fuel savings of up to 3.6 per cent in captive power operations, while tests at BPCL Mathura demonstrated viscosity and sulphur reduction benefits.

Sat Sharma highlights BJP's Ideological journey at Pt. Deen Dayal Prashikshan Mahabhiyan



**SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU**

J&K BJP President and MP (Rajya Sabha) Sat Sharma addressed a session of the training workshop organized under the Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay Prashikshan Mahabhiyan of District Jammu at Bhagwati Nagar, Jammu, emphasizing the ideological foundation, organizational strength, and historic journey of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

J&K BJP Vice-President Priya Sethi, General Secretary Sanjita

Dogra, District Prabhari Brijeshwar Singh Rana, District President Adv Rajesh Gupta, MLAs Yudhvir Sethi, and Arvind Gupta, Seh-Prabhari Arun Sharma, along with senior leaders, including District Office Bearers, and Executive Body were present in the workshop.

Sat Sharma, while addressing the participants, said that the Bharatiya Janata Party has emerged as the world's largest democratic political organization due to its unwavering commitment to nationalism, disciplined cadre-based structure, and dedication to public service.

He elaborated on the evolution of the party from the Bharatiya Jana Sangh to the BJP and highlighted the ideological contributions of great thinkers like Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee in shaping the party's vision and direction.

Sharma stressed that the Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay Prashikshan Mahabhiyan is aimed at strengthening organizational efficiency and equipping party workers with ideological clarity, leadership skills, and communication capabilities to effectively connect with the people at the grassroots level.

Sat Sharma further said that BJP workers have always played a vital role in nation-building and public welfare, and urged the participants to work with dedication, discipline, and commitment to further strengthen the party at every booth and organizational level.

Other senior leaders also addressed various sessions of the workshop, highlighting the importance of regular training programmes in enhancing the capabilities of party activists and ensuring effective implementation of the party's ideology and policies among the masses.

Article 370 abrogation opened new era of development in J&K: Sunil Sharma

**SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU**

Leader of Opposition in the J&K Assembly and senior BJP leader Sunil Sharma addressed an important session of the BJP's training workshop organized under the Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay Prashikshan Mahabhiyan by BJP District Kishtwar, where he highlighted the historic transformation witnessed in Jammu & Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

Addressing party workers, office bearers, and activists during the workshop, Sunil Sharma said that the abrogation of Article 370 by the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi marked a turning point in the history of Jammu & Kashmir. He stated that the decision ended decades of separatism, political uncertainty, corruption, and discrimination, which had hampered the overall development and progress of the Union Territory for many years.

He said that after the constitutional changes of August 5, 2019, Jammu & Kashmir has witnessed remarkable improvements in various sectors including road connectivity, health-care, education, tourism, power infrastructure, and employment generation. Sharma emphasized that democratic institutions have become stronger and transparent governance has ensured that the benefits of welfare schemes are reaching the common people without discrimination.

The senior BJP leader said that under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra



Modi, the people of J&K are now experiencing peace, stability, and new opportunities for growth and prosperity. He added that youth, women, farmers, and marginalized sections of society are being empowered through various centrally sponsored schemes and development initiatives.

Sunil Sharma urged BJP workers to remain closely connected with the masses and actively communicate the achievements and policies of the government at the grassroots level. He stressed that party cadres should work with dedication, discipline, and commitment while following the ideology and principles of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, whose philosophy of Antyodaya focuses on the welfare of the last person in society.

He further stated that such training workshops are being organized to ideologically strengthen party workers and equip them with organizational and leadership skills so that they can serve society more effectively and efficiently.

Earlier, Sunil Sharma inaugurated an exhibition set up before the commencement of the Prashikshan camp and appreciated the efforts of party workers in organizing the event successfully.

Among those present during the workshop were District President Ravi Kumar Parihar, MLA Shagun Parihar, senior BJP leaders, district office bearers, and members of the District Executive Body, who actively participated in the training session.

Drug abuse awareness seminar organized at PM Shri GGMS

**Jindrah
SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU**

A seminar on drug abuse awareness was successfully organised at PM Shri Government Girls Middle School Jindrah under the PM Shri initiative with the objective of creating awareness among students about the harmful effects of substance abuse and promoting a healthy, disciplined and responsible lifestyle. The programme was conducted under the supervision of Incharge Headmaster Shamash Din, while the event was coordinated by teacher Sadaket Ali.

During the seminar, students were sensitised about the serious physical, mental and social consequences of drug addiction. Speakers encouraged students to stay focused on education, moral values, sports and other positive activities to build a bright and secure future. The importance of collective efforts in creating a drug-free society was also highlighted during the programme.

Students actively participated in the seminar and expressed their views on the growing need to eradicate the menace of drugs from society. The programme aimed at motivating young minds to become ambassadors of awareness and responsibility in their communities.

As part of the event, medals were awarded to Afiea, Anju Devi, Ashish Kumar, Rachna Rajput, Amit Kumar and Vanshika Badyal in recognition of their participation and achievements. The programme concluded with a collective pledge by students and staff to spread awareness against drug abuse and work towards building a healthier and addiction-free society.

Technical issues delay Court challan clearance in Jammu:

**Traffic Police
SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU**

Following public concern and videos circulating on social media regarding the non-clearance of court challans, the Traffic Police Jammu has issued a clarification stating that the delays are due to technical issues being faced after the launch of the new "NextGen eChallan" application in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

According to officials, the "NextGen eChallan" application was launched by the National Informatics Centre on April 11, 2026, in accordance with the Central Motor Vehicles (3rd Amendment) Rules, 2026. Since its implementation, enforcement officers as well as e-challaning sections of different traffic units have been facing several operational difficulties during day-to-day functioning.

The major technical issues reported include failure to log into the application, non-fetching or partial fetching of data, frequent forced pull-backs and unstable service performance. Officials stated that the matter is being actively addressed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) and that the system is gradually stabilising with continuous improvements.

Despite the technical glitches, Traffic Police officials informed that more than 500 court challans have been successfully cleared by the concerned unit during the past five days.

The department further highlighted that Jammu and Kashmir is among the first States and Union Territories in the country where the "NextGen eChallan" system has been introduced, marking an important step towards digitisation and transparent traffic enforcement mechanisms.

Senior Superintendent of Police Traffic (Rural) Jammu, Farooq Qaiser, appealed to the public not to panic and assured that all pending challans would be cleared at the earliest once the technical issues are fully resolved. He further stated that the Traffic Police is committed to ensuring smooth implementation of the new digital system and providing hassle-free services to the public.

MLA Mohan Lal Bhagat holds public grievances camp at Akhnoor

SYSTEM OBSERVER
AKHNOOR

MLA Akhnoor Mohan Lal Bhagat today organized a public grievances redressal camp at Forest Rest House, Akhnoor, where a large number of people from various panchayats, municipal wards and border belts projected their issues and demands before the MLA and officers. During the camp, the MLA heard public grievances patiently and directed concerned departments to resolve several issues on priority. He also fixed timelines for disposal of pending matters and warned officials against negligence, unnecessary delay and poor delivery of public services.

Among others present on the occasion were SDM Khour Satish Sharma, SDM Akhnoor Mukhtar Ahmad, Tehsildar Akhnoor Naresh Kumar, SDPO Akhnoor Varinder Gupta, XEN Flood Control Rajesh Gupta, XEN PWD Sanjeev Sharma, officers of Irrigation Department, Agriculture Department, Rural Development Department and various other departments.

Taking serious note of frequent unscheduled power cuts in Akhnoor town and adjoining areas, Mohan Lal Bhagat directed the Power Development Department to

Issues strict directions to departments over power cuts, public services



minimize unscheduled outages, particularly in areas where smart meters have already been installed. He also gave a 15-day deadline for resolution of faulty and inflated electricity bills and asked the department to organize special grievance camps for affected consumers. The MLA further directed officials to rationalize load management between City-1 and City-2 feeders.

Reviewing the status of Jal Jeevan Mission schemes, the MLA sought detailed updates regarding pending projects and expressed concern over the slow pace of

AMRUT works in Akhnoor and Jourian towns. He instructed the concerned authorities to ensure regular drinking water supply, proper utilization of reserve pumps and transparent distribution of water tankers.

The MLA also expressed concern over alleged corruption and the role of middlemen in Revenue Department offices and directed officers to ensure transparent and people-friendly functioning.

The issue of bovine smuggling also came up prominently during the camp. Former Sarpanch Kishori Lal Sharma and several locals alleged that

bovines are being smuggled during late night hours from Sohal, Sungal and adjoining areas. Responding to the issue, the MLA directed SDPO Akhnoor to intensify night patrolling and surveillance, particularly between midnight and 5 am.

Residents from Pargwal area, including Surjeet Singh, highlighted problems related to irrigation water not reaching tail-end agricultural fields and issues arising due to land acquisition under wetland projects. The MLA directed the Irrigation Department and concerned authorities to take immediate corrective

measures.

People residing along the banks of river Chenab also demanded early completion of flood protection works on vulnerable stretches. The MLA instructed Flood Control authorities to expedite ongoing protection works while maintaining quality standards.

Addressing the gathering, Mohan Lal Bhagat said that despite being in the Opposition, he remains committed towards equal development of all areas of the constituency. He said several developmental projects worth crores have been initiated in Akhnoor, including construction of a modern library worth Rs 1.31 crore, Municipal Committee works worth Rs 5 crore and flood protection works worth Rs 12 crore. He further informed that establishment of Government ITI Akhnoor is in pipeline. The MLA added that restoration of the old hospital building has been approved and establishment of a Mini Secretariat in Akhnoor remains among big his top priorities. Assuring people of transparent governance, he said corruption and negligence would not be tolerated and all grievances highlighted during the camp would be monitored personally for timely redressal.

Massive Fire Engulfs Three Shops in Akhnoor, Rescue Operation Continues for Over 12 Hours

SYSTEM OBSERVER
AKHNOOR

A massive fire broke out on the busy Akhnoor-Jourian main road in Akhnoor town on Friday morning, reducing three commercial establishments to ashes and causing damage to two residential houses located behind the shops. Thick black smoke billowing from the blaze could be seen from several parts of the town, creating panic among residents and shopkeepers.

According to reports, local residents noticed smoke emerging from TK Traders Hardware & Sanitary Showroom at around 6:00 AM and immediately informed the Fire & Emergency Services, police authorities, and the shop owners. Before firefighting teams could fully respond, the flames rapidly spread to the adjoining OPKL Traders hardware store and Babu Ram Sweets.

A massive firefighting and rescue operation was launched with around ten fire tenders of the Fire & Emergency Department, supported by water tankers from the Jal Shakti Department. A ladder-mounted fire engine was



also pressed into service to control the flames on the upper floors of the affected structures. Due to the intensity of the fire and the highly inflammable material stored inside the hardware

shops, firefighters faced immense difficulty in entering the premises.

The fire further spread towards the rear side of the buildings, damaging two nearby houses. As a precau-

tionary measure, JCB machines were used to partially demolish rear walls to release pressure and prevent a larger tragedy. Eyewitnesses stated that the flames had reached the rooftops, causing portions of the structures to burst open.

Several nearby establishments, including Bhagwati Medical Clinic and adjoining shops, were evacuated as a safety measure. Despite continuous efforts for more than 12 hours, the fire had not been completely brought under control till the filing of this report.

Akhnoor Police, under the leadership of SHO Dr. Ahmad, played a crucial role in maintaining law and order and regulating crowds during the operation. SDM Akhnoor Mukhtar Lone, SDPO Akhnoor Varinder Gupta, Tehsildar Naresh Kumar, and senior officials of the Fire & Emergency Department remained present on the spot throughout the operation.

MLA Akhnoor Mohan Lal also visited the site, interacted with the affected shopkeepers, expressed solidarity with them, and directed officials to intensify relief and rescue measures.

Traffic movement on the

Akhnoor-Jourian road remained disrupted for several hours, forcing authorities to divert vehicles through alternate routes.

The exact cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained; however, preliminary assumptions suggest that either short circuiting or inflammable pooja material may have triggered the blaze. Significant losses to goods and infrastructure have been reported.

Notably, Akhnoor town has witnessed several major fire incidents in recent years. On November 6, 2025, a major blaze damaged Reema Textiles in Raja Bazaar. On March 21, 2024, another fire incident occurred in a shop at Pakka Danga market. Earlier, on September 30, 2023, a devastating fire at a furniture showroom in Gandarwan claimed the life of the owner. Similarly, on July 30, 2022, the old hardware shop of TK Traders at Pakka Danga was gutted in a fire incident. Repeated fire tragedies have raised serious concerns regarding fire safety preparedness and emergency response infrastructure in the town.

Dy CM conducts extensive tour of Akhnoor; inspects colleges, development projects



**SYSTEM OBSERVER
AKHNOOR**

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary today conducted an extensive tour of Akhnoor and adjoining areas to review the progress of ongoing developmental works besides assessing the institutional infrastructure across several educational establishments.

During the visit, the Deputy Chief Minister inspected various projects and interacted with the students, faculty members and staff to take first-hand appraisal of the academic facilities, infrastructure development and overall functioning of the institutions.

At the Government College of Engineering and Technology, Chak Bhalwal, Jammu, the Deputy Chief Minister reviewed the ongoing developmental works and inspected the institutional facilities.

He stressed the need for creating quality infrastructure, ensuring timely completion of projects and strengthening the academic environment for the benefit of students. He directed the concerned authorities to maintain high standards in execution of works and ensure that modern educational facilities are made available to the student community.

Later, the Deputy Chief Minister visited the Government Ayurvedic Medical College, Sangani, Akhnoor, where he reviewed the ongoing hostel construction works along with MLA Akhnoor, Mohan Lal Bhagat.

During the visit, he interacted with the students and staff members and sought feedback regarding institutional facilities and accommodation needs.

He emphasized timely completion of the hostel project with quality construction standards so that better facilities are provided to the students.

The Deputy Chief Minister also inspected the ongoing works at Government Nursing College, Akhnoor along with MLA Akhnoor Mohan Lal Bhagat.

During detailed interaction with the faculty members and students regarding the academic activities, the Deputy Chief Minister called for speedy infrastructure development.

The Deputy Chief Minister directed the concerned officers to ensure speedy execution of all ongoing works while strictly adhering to quality standards and timelines.

"The government is committed towards creating better educational infrastructure, providing a conducive learning environment for the students across Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Later, the Deputy Chief Minister also visited Indripatten Bridge project site at Pragwal, Akhnoor and reviewed the progress of ongoing works.

Terming the project as vital, he stressed upon timely execution and completion of the bridge to improve the connectivity and public convenience in the area.

Municipal Committee Akhnoor Intensifies Anti-Encroachment Drive, 10 Shopkeepers Penalized

**SYSTEM OBSERVER
AKHNOOR**

In a major move to streamline traffic and ensure smooth public movement, the Municipal Committee Akhnoor carried out a special anti-encroachment drive across key areas of the town, including Raja Bazaar, Jourian Road, Bus Stand and Sungal Morh. The drive was conducted under the directions of Executive Officer Mohammad Yaqoob and supervised by Enforcement Inspector Devinder Singh.

During the operation, action was taken against 10 shopkeepers found encroaching upon public spaces, and a total fine of ₹5,000 was imposed. The enforcement team also seized large quantities of goods and materials placed illegally on roads, streets and footpaths.

Municipal officials removed temporary structures, display counters, tarpaulins and other items obstructing pedestrian pathways and vehicular movement. Shopkeepers were strictly warned against repeating such violations in future.

Speaking on the occasion, Executive Officer Mohammad Yaqoob said that footpaths are meant for pedestrians and roads are

meant for vehicles, and no form of encroachment on public spaces will be tolerated. He stated that the anti-encroachment campaign will now be intensified and conducted regularly to tackle growing traffic congestion and maintain civic order in the town.

He also appealed to shopkeepers to keep their merchandise within their premises and avoid placing tarpaulins or display items in the middle of roads and lanes. Special warning was issued to roadside vendors and rehri-fadi operators, with officials clarifying that vending licenses do not permit permanent occupation of public spaces.

The Executive Officer further observed that unregulated roadside vending has become one of the major causes of traffic jams in the town. He urged traders to voluntarily cooperate with the administration, adding that wider and obstruction-free pathways would ultimately benefit businesses by making it easier for customers to access shops.

The Municipal Committee reiterated its commitment to keeping Akhnoor clean, organized and encroachment-free, while ensuring safer and smoother movement for the public.



Akhnoor Launches Massive Census 2027 Self-Enumeration Awareness Campaign

**SYSTEM OBSERVER
AKHNOOR**

A large-scale awareness rally and public outreach campaign regarding Census 2027 Self-Enumeration was conducted today in the main market area of Akhnoor under the supervision of the Charge Officer (Urban), Census 2027, Akhnoor Mohammad Yaqoob (EO MC Akhnoor).

The rally was flagged off by Hon'ble MLA Akhnoor, Mohan Lal, who appealed to the public to actively participate in Census 2027 and support the administration in achieving the target of 100 percent Self-Enumeration in Akhnoor Urban Area.

Prominent citizens including Sanjay Saraf, Ex-



President Municipal Committee Akhnoor, Atul Raman, President Hari Mandir Shiv Ghat Team, Sudan, Social Activist, Rahul Langar, Swachhata

Champion, and Raman, Educationist, participated in the awareness campaign along with officials, staff members and local residents.

Awareness announcements were made throughout the market area, and live demonstrations of the Self-Enumeration portal, <https://se.census.gov.in>, were conducted to educate citizens regarding the online registration process.

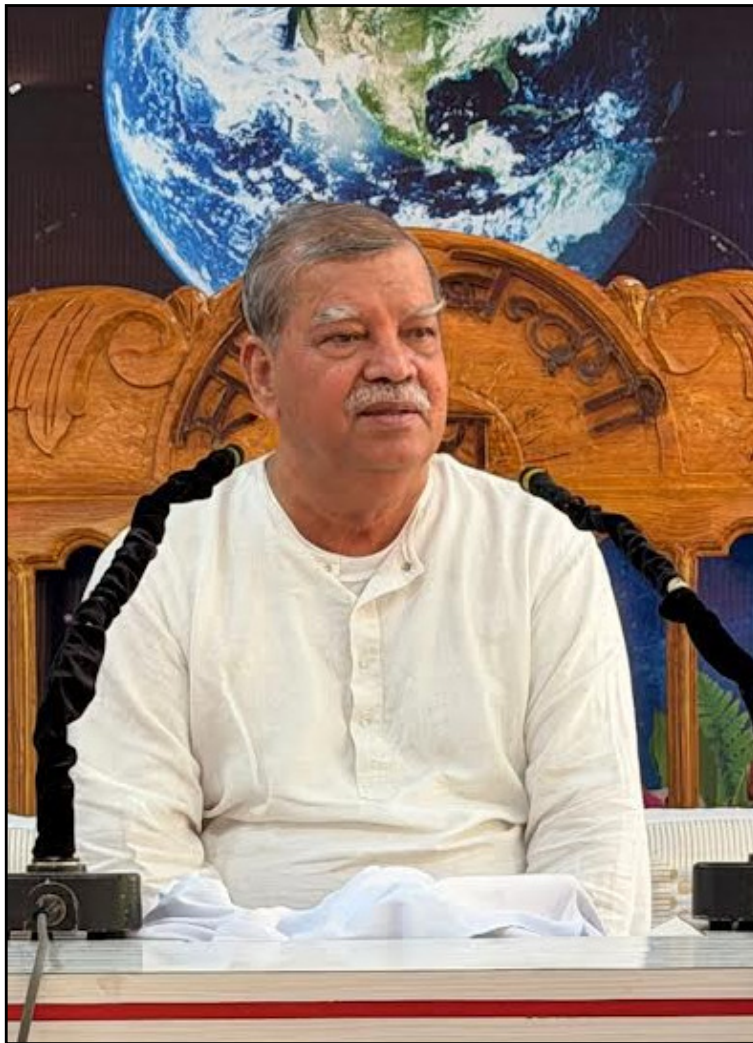
As part of the outreach programme, the Municipal Committee team also visited prominent citizens including Rajeev Sharma, Ex-MLA, Deepesh Singh, Ex-President, Surinder Sharma, Ex-President, Shilpa Mahajan, Ex-Councillor and Educationist, Khema Devi,

Ex-Councillor, Rakesh Malhotra, Ex-Councillor, and Dr. Gafoor Chowdhury, and appealed for public cooperation and active participation in the Census 2027 Self-Enumeration exercise.

Addressing the gathering, Hon'ble MLA Mohan Lal stated that Census data plays a vital role in future planning and development related to infrastructure, sanitation, healthcare, education, and welfare schemes, and urged all residents to complete Self-Enumeration within the notified timeline.

Self-Enumeration shall remain open from 17th May 2026 to 31st May 2026, followed by House Listing activities from 1st June 2026 to 30th June 2026.

“Divine Name Remembrance is the Ultimate Cure for All Sorrows and Diseases: Sadguru Shri Madhu Paramhans Ji Maharaj



**SYSTEM OBSERVER
AKHNOOR**

Sadguru Shri Madhu Paramhans Ji Maharaj of

Sahib Bandgi, while showering the nectar of his discourses upon the devotees at Akhnoor, Jammu, today stated that if there is a cure

for all ailments, it is the remembrance (*Sumiran*) of the Divine Name. There is a profound reason for this.

We experience suffering due to our senses. Within the body reside lust, anger, greed, attachment, and ego; it is from these very elements that diseases and afflictions arise. Saints and sages have proclaimed repeatedly-with great urgency-that if you seek true happiness in this world, you must take refuge in the Divine Name.

The senses are extremely treacherous. He who has mastered his senses is a true *Sadhu* (sage). Consider, for instance, a person whose mind is disturbed; whatever he utters-even inadvertently-is precisely what the mind will deliberately latch onto and replay. Certain forces seem to be intentionally conspiring to torment you. You may hear an insult with your ears, yet the soul itself has absolutely no connection to it. The entire chaotic turmoil occurring within the physical body is, in itself, a perilous trap.

In modern times, domestic and familial sorrows have become rampant. Historically, India possessed a robust system of joint families (*Kutumb*); our ancient sages and seers had meticu-

lously established this social order. Today, however, when a daughter-in-law enters the household, she often desires a separate establishment of her own. The individual soul (*Jiva*) has become deeply entangled in the present age; this *Jivatma* is bound by a multitude of fetters. One may possess millions or billions in wealth, yet if there is constant discord and strife within the home, the result is nothing but unadulterated misery.

Twenty-four hours a day, the mind holds the soul in thrall, making it dance to its own tunes. Why, then, should one continue to dwell upon memories that cause nothing but pain and distress? The senses and the mind conspire to keep you perpetually occupied, specifically to prevent you from engaging in the remembrance of the Divine Name. Whenever you sit down to meditate, the mind invariably diverts your attention hither and thither. Consequently, you are unable to experience the true spiritual bliss (*Ras*) that meditation offers. Therefore, Sahib advises us to strive-with all our might-to achieve mental concentration. The mind, however, is inherently resistant to allowing you to become focused. Achieving such concentra-

tion is by no means an easy task.

What, then, is the ultimate objective of *Sumiran* (remembrance)? All the diverse spiritual paths, sects, and schools of thought dedicated to the union of the soul with the Supreme Being (*Paramatma*) unanimously affirm that it is only by focusing and concentrating our attention that we can truly realize the nature of both the individual soul and the Supreme Soul. This focused attention-this concentrated awareness-is, in essence, the very soul itself. It is this state that Sahib has termed *Surati*.

The mind is akin to a vast ocean; within its depths, waves in the form of desires rise and surge ceaselessly. Unless you achieve concentration, you will not experience anything internal. The soul need not make any effort to attain happiness; happiness is inherent within it. All scriptural authorities have described it as *Anandamayi*-full of bliss. Whatever pleasures you derive from the material world eventually turn into sources of suffering. They may appear to be happiness, but they are not. Therefore, to attain the happiness of the soul, focus your meditation..

Govt restructures J&K Engineering Gazetted Cadre in Jal Shakti Department

**SYSTEM OBSERVER
SRINAGAR**

In a significant step aimed at enhancing the water supply, quality monitoring and engineering administration across Jammu and Kashmir, the government has approved a comprehensive cadre review and restructuring of the J&K Engineering (Gazetted) Service of the Jal Shakti Department. The reforms have been sanctioned vide Government Order No. 91-JK(JSD) of 2026 dated 15.05.2026, following concurrence from the Finance Department and approval by the Council of Ministers.

The restructuring exercise was undertaken to enhance the administrative efficiency, improve technical supervision, streamline field operations and address the emerging challenges in the water sector, particularly in remote and underserved regions. As part of the approved reforms, the government has sanctioned creation of the post of Secretary Technical in the Jal Shakti Department to strengthen technical coordination and policy implementation at the departmental level.

To improve water quality surveillance and monitoring mechanisms, the government has also approved the setting up of a separate Drinking Water Inspection and Quality Control (DIQC) wing within the department. Further strengthening the field engineering setup, new offices of Superintending Engineer have been created for Hydraulic Circle Jammu-I and Hydraulic Circle Bandipora to ensure better operational management and supervision of water supply infrastructure.

The government has also approved creation of six new divisions, including Hydraulic Divisions at Gandoh, Gurez and Tangdar, PHE Division Mendhar and two Water Quality and Monitoring Divisions for the Jammu and Kashmir provinces. These divisions are expected to significantly improve the service delivery in geographically challenging and border areas.

In another major reform, Mechanical Sub-Divisions of the department have been restructured to optimize manpower utilization and improve efficiency in

mechanical operations and maintenance. The order also provides for creation of 43 posts through rationalization and corresponding reduction of 62 existing posts besides encadrement of 10 posts and reassignment of 137 posts within the cadre structure.

Additionally, the government has revised deputation and leave reserve provisions across various engineering levels to ensure better human resource management and career progression opportunities within the department. The cadre review is expected to substantially strengthen the institutional capacity within the Jal Shakti Department and enhance delivery of safe drinking water and allied public utility services across Jammu and Kashmir.

Notably, under the leadership of Jal Shakti Minister Javed Ahmed Rana, the department has witnessed major human resource reforms aimed at revitalizing the engineering and technical workforce while expediting the long-pending promotions and direct recruitment processes.

In a major breakthrough for the sector, nearly 300

engineers were appointed recently, significantly strengthening the human resource capacity of the department.

The latest cadre restructuring and recruitment ini-

tiatives are being viewed as transformative measures for improving the governance, efficiency and public service delivery in the Jal Shakti sector across the Union Territory.

Police attach properties worth Rs 5.8 crore linked to 3 drug peddlers in Srinagar

SRINAGAR

Police in Srinagar have attached properties worth 5.8 crore belonging to three alleged drug peddlers as part of an ongoing crackdown on narcotics trafficking in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Saturday. A team from the Khanyar police station attached three immovable properties along with a vehicle belonging to the accused under Section 68-F of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, a police spokesman said.

The action was part of the 100-day 'Nasha Mukht Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan' launched by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on April 11 to curb drug trafficking and dismantle the financial networks of those involved in it, officials said. The first property belonged to Nazir Ahmad Mir, alias Nazir Lashkari - a double-storey residential house along with eight shops built on 4.5 marlas of land at Koolipora in Khanyar - estimated to be worth Rs 3.2 crore, the spokesman said.

The second property belonged to Gulzar Ahmad Mir, a resident of Miskeen Bagh, Khanyar. It included an SUV along with seven marlas of land and a temporary structure erected on it, with a combined estimated value of Rs 1.8 crore, the spokesman said. The third belonged to Zahid Manzoor Rather, a resident of Lone Mohalla, Nowpora Khanyar, comprising a single-storey residential house built on nine marlas of land, valued at Rs 80 lakh, he said. The attached assets were acquired using proceeds of narcotics trafficking, the spokesman added.