

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! J&K crowned Ranji...

champions Karnataka ended in a draw. The team showcased grit and composure to secure the trophy on the strength of a commanding 291-run first-innings lead. The team tightened its grip on the contest by piling up 342/4 in the second innings, stretching the overall advantage to 633 runs by the end of the fifth and final day at the KSCA Rajnagar Stadium in Hubballi.

Opener Qamran Iqbal led from the front with an unbeaten 160 - his second century in first-class cricket - while Sahil Lotra struck a fluent maiden hundred (101 not out), ensuring J&K remained firmly in control.

With the ball, Auqib Nabi once again proved decisive. The pacer claimed a five-wicket haul for the seventh time this season, underlining his consistency and impact throughout the campaign.

The Chief Minister, who was present at the stadium to witness the historic occasion, met the players after the match and congratulated them personally.

He applauded Qamran Iqbal and Sahil Lotra for their remarkable innings and commended Auqib Nabi for his match-winning spells, noting that his disciplined bowling was instrumental in steering the team to the title.

Jammu and Kashmir made their debut in India's premier domestic competition 67 years ago. Despite reaching the quarterfinals in previous seasons, the elusive championship had remained out of reach - until now.

Witnessing the final day of the Ranji Trophy Final, the Chief Minister said he travelled to Hubballi to personally cheer the team as they move towards sealing a historic victory.

"I am in Hubballi to cheer the J&K cricket team as they seal a historic win. There hasn't been a single day in this five-day final when the team has not dominated the opposition," he remarked.

"They've done it. Well done J&K," Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said in a post on his personal handle on X immediately after the team's win.

The Chief Minister arrived in Karnataka on Friday evening to lend his support to the team in what is being hailed as a landmark chapter in the sporting history of Jammu & Kashmir. With hopes, prayers, and unwavering support from across the region, the team is poised to clinch the prestigious title in their maiden appearance in the final of India's premier domestic cricket championship.

Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Zaidal Tanvir Sadiq, and the Administrator J&K Cricket Association accompanied the Chief Minister.

Meanwhile, celebrations erupted across the Union territory, with firecrackers, beats of dhols and drums reverberating through streets and sweets being distributed in the twin capital cities and other areas from where team members hail.

US, Israel launch...

"the brave Iranian people to take their fate into their own hands."

The strikes during the holy fasting month of Ramadan opened a stunning new chapter in US intervention in Iran, and marked the second time in eight months that the Trump administration has attacked the Islamic Republic during talks over its nuclear program. Weeks earlier, a US military operation captured Venezuela's president, Nicolás Maduro.

The targets included members of Iran's leadership, according to a US official and another person briefed on the attacks who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing operation. There was no immediate information on whether top officials were killed.

Even if Iran's top leaders are killed, regime change is not guaranteed. Neither the US nor Israel have articulated a vision for what new leadership might look like.

Democrats decried that Trump had taken action without congressional authorisation. White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said the Trump administration had briefed several Republican and Democratic leaders in Congress in advance of the attack.

The UN Security Council said it would meet Saturday afternoon. In a letter to the council, Araghchi said "all bases, facilities, and assets of the hostile forces in the region shall be regarded as legitimate military objectives."

Iran also requested an urgent session of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors about "these threats to safeguarded nuclear facilities," according to a letter posted by the semi-official Tasnim news agency.

The UN's nuclear watchdog said on X it was closely monitoring developments and had seen "no evidence of radiological impact."

Tensions have soared in recent weeks as American warships moved into the region. Trump said he wanted a deal to constrain Iran's nuclear program at a moment when the country is struggling at home with growing dissent following nationwide protests.

The immediate trigger for Saturday's strikes appeared to be the unsuccessful latest round of nuclear talks. But they also reflected dramatic changes that have left Iran's leadership in its weakest position since the Islamic Revolution nearly half a century ago.

Israeli and American strikes last June greatly weakened Iran's air defenses, military leadership and nuclear program. A region-wide war, sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel, has left Iran's network of proxies across the Middle East greatly weakened. US sanctions and global isolation, meanwhile, have decimated Iran's economy.

Iran responded to the latest strikes by launching missiles and drones targeting Israel and strikes targeting US military installations in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. Israel's military said Iran fired "dozens" of missiles at Israel, with many intercepted and no serious injuries reported. Emergency responder Magen David Adom noted 89 "lightly injured" people.

At least three explosions were heard Saturday evening near the Intelligence Ministry building in northern Tehran, witnesses said, adding that air defense systems had begun operating in the area. There was no immediate statement in Iranian media, while Israel's military said it had begun a new wave of strikes against missile launchers and aerial defense systems in central Iran.

In southern Iran, at least 85 people were reported killed after a girls' school was struck, and dozens more were wounded, the local governor told Iranian state TV.

Capt. Tim Hawkins, a spokesman for US Central Command, said he was "aware of reports" that a girls' school was struck and they were looking into them.

Flights across the Middle East were disrupted, and air defense fire thudded over Dubai, the United Arab Emirates' commercial capital. Shrapnel from an Iranian missile attack on the UAE capital killed one person, state media said.

The US military for weeks has amassed forces in the region, even as US and Iranian envoys held talks in Switzerland and Oman.

"Active and serious negotiations have yet again been undermined," Oman's Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi, a key mediator, said on X. "Neither the interests of the United States nor the cause of global peace are well served by this."

Israel said the operation has been planned for months with the US. "Air Force pilots are striking hundreds of targets across Iran, at significant personal risk and in coordination with US strikes," Israeli military chief of staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir said in a statement.

Targets in the Israeli campaign included Iran's military, symbols of government and intelligence targets, according to an official briefed on the operation, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss nonpublic information on the attack.

Trump, in seeking to justify the military action, claimed Iran has continued to develop its nuclear program, despite asserting last year the program had been "obliterated" by an earlier round of strikes. He acknowledged Saturday that there could be American casualties, saying "that often happens in war."

It was a notable call from a US leader who swept into office on an "America First" platform and vowed to keep out of "forever wars."

Trump's statement listed grievances beyond the nuclear program, stretching back to the beginning of the Islamic Republic, following a revolution in 1979 that turned Iran from an American ally into a fierce foe.

The US president said he was aiming to "annihilate" the Iranian navy and destroy regional proxies supported by Tehran. He called on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard to lay down arms, pledging members would be given immunity, while warning they would face "certain death" if they didn't.

Trump had threatened military action, but held off, following Iran's recent crackdown on protests spurred by economic grievances that evolved into a nationwide, anti-government push against the ruling clerics.

The Human Rights Activists News Agency says it confirmed more than 7,000 deaths in the crackdown and is investigating thousands more. The government has acknowledged more than 3,000 killed.

Iran has said it hasn't enriched uranium since June, but it has blocked international inspectors from visiting the sites America bombed. Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press have shown new activity at two of those sites, suggesting Iran is trying to assess and potentially recover material there.

Iran said it hoped to avert a war, but maintained its right to enrich uranium. Its leaders did not want to discuss other issues, such as its long-range missile program or support for armed groups like Hamas and Hezbollah.

The strikes could rattle global markets, particularly if Iran is able to make the Strait of Hormuz unsafe for commercial traffic. A third of total worldwide oil exports transported by sea passed through the strait in 2025.

Saudi Arabia said in an announcement on state-run media that Iran had targeted its capital and its eastern region in an attack that was repelled.

Kuwait's civil aviation authority said a drone targeted the main international airport, injuring several employees. Kuwait's health ministry said 12 people were injured in strikes. Bahrain said a missile attack targeted the US Navy's 5th Fleet headquarters in the island kingdom. Explosions could also be heard in Qatar. Jordan said it "dealt with" 49 drones and ballistic missiles.

The Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen vowed to resume attacks on Red Sea shipping routes and on Israel, according to two senior Houthi officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because there was no official announcement.

'Moment of immense pride, joy for people': Farooq

Dy CM, Ministers, political leaders hail victory

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah Saturday heaped praises on the Jammu and Kashmir cricket team for its maiden triumph in the Ranji Trophy finals by defeating the star-studded Karnataka team.

Abdullah described the victory as a moment of immense pride and joy for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The team's remarkable performance throughout the tournament reflects their dedication, discipline and indomitable spirit, he said.

Abdullah lauded the players for their resilience and commitment, noting that their achievement has brought great honour to the region on the national stage.

The NC chief also congratulated the coaches, support staff, selectors and the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association for their tireless efforts in grooming and guiding the team.

He emphasized that this victory is a testament to the hard work being put into strengthening sports infrastructure and nurturing young talent in Jammu and Kashmir.

Abdullah expressed hope the landmark achievement would inspire the youth of the region to pursue excellence in sports and other fields and wished the team continued success in future tournaments.

Terming the victory a remarkable achievement, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary said it is a moment of immense pride not only for the play-

ers of the Jammu and Kashmir team but also for their families and the entire people of Jammu and Kashmir.

He said that the prestigious title has been clinched through sheer hard work, discipline, and dedication displayed by the players, team management, coaching staff, and all those associated with the team's success.

"It is great honour for all of us to win this championship, that too against an eight-time champion, Karnataka," he said.

The Deputy Chief Minister reiterated that the Government of Jammu and Kashmir remains committed to creating adequate sports infrastructure and providing necessary platforms to the youth to excel in their chosen fields. He expressed hope that this historic win would inspire more young talent from J&K to pursue sports and bring further laurels to Jammu and Kashmir.

Minister for Youth Services and Sports and Science and Technology, Satish Sharma, in his felicitation message, hailed the victory as a landmark moment in J&K's sports history, crediting the team's unyielding spirit, skill and perseverance. "This triumph showcases their unwavering dedication and pursuit of excellence," he said.

The Minister lauded the entire team, coaching staff and support personnel for their outstanding commitment and teamwork, noting that their collective efforts have brought immense pride and joy to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He

remarked that winning the Ranji Trophy, one of India's most prestigious and competitive domestic cricket tournaments, is a monumental accomplishment that will be remembered for generations.

Highlighting the broader significance of the achievement, the Minister said the triumph marks a major milestone in the development of sports in Jammu and Kashmir and underscores the immense talent and potential that exists among the region's youth. He expressed confidence that this historic success will inspire a new generation of aspiring cricketers and sportspersons to pursue excellence with renewed passion and dedication.

The Minister further reaffirmed the government's continued commitment towards strengthening sports infrastructure, expanding training opportunities and promoting grassroots development across the Union Territory to ensure that young athletes receive the support and encouragement they need to excel at national and international level.

He expressed hope that the team will continue its winning momentum in future competitions and serve as proud ambassadors of Jammu and Kashmir, bringing further laurels to the region. The Minister further wished players for continued success and excellence, stating that their achievement has not only elevated the sporting profile of Jammu and Kashmir but has united the people in celebration and pride.

Railways allow trans-shipment at specific locations for faster parcel delivery across Jammu Div

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: In a significant decision to make parcel services across Jammu more efficient, transparent, and customer-centric, the Railway board has authorised trans-shipment at identified stations and designated locations for dedicated parcel trains as well as leased parcel vans, an official said on Saturday.

The move will reduce the time taken for parcels to reach their destination, thereby ensuring faster delivery to merchants, the spokesperson of the Northern Railway's Jammu division said.

Previously, trans-shipment of parcels from one train to another and reloading them onto another train was not permitted, which was adversely affecting merchants and parcel revenue.

The officials said the new guidelines issued by the Railway board would be particularly beneficial for perishables and time-sensitive consignments.

"This policy allows transshipment at smaller stations, making rail transport a cheaper option than road transport," the official said.

Speaking on the development, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Uchit Singhla, said, the Railways' primary goal is to reduce transit time for parcel logistics.

Previously, parcels were delayed due to lack of direct connectivity, he said.

"Now that trans-shipment is permitted at specific stations, we will be able to connect various routes. This will not only increase the Railways' operational efficiency but also help small traders and e-commerce companies ensure safe and quick delivery of their goods," he said.

Modi launches nationwide HPV vaccination drive for 14-year-old girls

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAIPUR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched a nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign for 14-year-old girls from Ajmer in Rajasthan.

The campaign against cervical cancer was formally inaugurated at a programme held in Kayad, Ajmer, where several girls were administered the vaccine. The prime minister also interacted with the beneficiaries on the occasion.

According to officials, a single-dose "Gardasil 4" vaccine, a quadrivalent HPV vaccine, will be used under the campaign. The injection provides protection against HPV types 16 and 18, which are responsible for cervical cancer, as well as types 6 and 11.

The Union Health Ministry, in an official communication sent to all states on February 25, stated, "All 14-year-old girls across the country will be administered a single dose of the 'Gardasil 4' vaccine at government health facilities, including Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (Primary Health Centres), Community Health Centres, sub-district and district hospitals, and government medical colleges and hospitals."

J&K targets 100 pc business reforms compliance in next 3 months

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Saturday stressed the need for holding a comprehensive stakeholders' conference to ensure smooth, time-bound and effective implementation of reform-oriented deregulations introduced under the 'Reduction of Compliance Burden' initiative aimed at strengthening Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) across Jammu & Kashmir.

The Chief Secretary was chairing a high-level review meeting to assess the progress achieved under Phase-II of the Ease of Doing Business reforms and subsequently reviewed the District Business Reforms Action Plan (D-BRAP) in a separate session. These reforms are being implemented under the guidance of the Government of India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

The meeting, coordinated by the Industries & Commerce Department, was attended by the Administrative Secretaries and senior officers including ACS, Power Development Department; ACS, Agriculture Production Department and Tourism; ACS, Finance; Principal Secretary, Home;

Commissioner Secretaries of FCS&CA, Forests, Housing & Urban Development, Industries & Commerce and

Law; Secretary, Labour & Employment; Secretary, Transport; Director, Industries, Jammu; and other concerned officers.

Taking a comprehensive department-wise review of services and reform parameters mandated under EoDB-II and D-BRAP, the Chief Secretary underscored the importance of bringing all public and private stakeholders on board.

He directed the Industries & Commerce Department to convene a stakeholders' conference at the earliest to sensitize entrepreneurs, industry representatives, district officials and service providers about their roles and responsibilities under the revised framework.

He observed that significant progress has been made in notifying designated services under the Public Services Guarantee Act (PSGA), with clearly defined timelines for delivery. He stressed that all such services had been made available strictly through online mode, as envisaged under the D-BRAP framework, ensuring transparency, accountability and reduced physical interface.

The Chief Secretary further advised the department to draw upon the successful model of Mission YUVA, where a Single Business Development Unit (SBDU) is already operational. He suggested upgrading this

mechanism into a more robust institutional support system to create a conducive ecosystem for innovation, entrepreneurship and investment across the Union Territory.

Reiterating the Government's commitment to reform-driven governance, the Chief Secretary directed all departments to ensure complete implementation of the prescribed reforms within the next three months without fail. He emphasized that the pace of reform must not slacken and that tangible results must be achieved under all circumstances.

Calling for seamless coordination from the grassroots to the highest administrative level, he stressed that the reforms must translate into real benefits for businesses and citizens by simplifying procedures, minimizing compliance requirements and enhancing service delivery standards.

Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce, Vikramjit Singh, presented the overall framework of D-BRAP and informed the meeting that 46 services have been identified by DPIIT for mandatory digitization.

He further added that these services have already been notified under the PSGA, are being delivered through online platforms and are being monitored through a real-time dashboard by the concerned authorities in

accordance with the scheme's requirements.

Director, Industries, Jammu, Arun Manhas, apprised the meeting of the department-wise categorization of services and outlined the specific responsibilities of departments and district administrations for their effective implementation. He presented the current online status of each service along with their PSGA notification status.

It was informed that a real-time monitoring dashboard, developed in compliance with DPIIT guidelines, showcases key components of both e-services and inspection modules, enabling effective oversight and performance tracking.

The meeting was also informed that DPIIT has launched D-BRAP 2025 comprising 154 reform points to be implemented by all States and Union Territories. All concerned departments in J&K have been tasked with developing new or modifying existing services to ensure 100 percent compliance by March 31, 2026.

The D-BRAP framework encompasses a broad spectrum of citizen-centric and business-related services. These include land demarcation and boundary verification, change in land use permissions, property registration and mutation, digitization of land records,

approvals and registrations for setting up play schools and private educational institutions, and issuance of Mandi licenses (APMC).

The reforms also mandate online issuance of licenses and permissions for establishment of health clinics and diagnostic centres, goods and passenger transport permits, new electricity connections, building plan approvals, demolition and reconstruction permissions, certificates of vending for street vendors, parking licenses, No Objection Certificates for hotels, restaurants and entertainment establishments, water supply connections, and shop and establishment registrations, among others.

In addition, the action plan seeks to strengthen District Industries Centres and promote development of industrial parks to attract sector-specific investments. The overarching objective is to create an enabling, investor-friendly ecosystem at the district level, fostering sustainable economic growth and employment generation across Jammu & Kashmir.

The Chief Secretary reiterated that these reforms are aimed at transforming governance through digitization, transparency and time-bound service delivery, thereby positioning Jammu & Kashmir as a competitive and investment-ready destination for all times to come.

PM Shri Girls High School Degwar-M, Poonch organises plantation drive

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

POONCH: PM SHRI Girls High School Degwar-M Poonch today organised a massive plantation drive under the banner of Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) as part of its ongoing commitment towards environmental sustainability and ecological awareness.

The programme was organised under the guidance of the Eco Club of the school, wherein more than 100 herbal, flowering and other environmentally friendly plants were planted within the school premises. The plantation drive aimed to promote green practices and instill environmental responsibility among students.

The occasion also marked the superannuation of Headmaster of the school, Ranjeet Kour, who rendered 40 years of dedicated service in the Education Department. On her last working day,

she actively participated in the plantation drive, symbolically planting saplings as a gesture of her lifelong commitment to nurturing young minds and protecting nature.

Addressing the gathering, Ranjeet Kour expressed gratitude to the department and her colleagues for their continuous support throughout her service career. She emphasised the importance of environmental conservation and urged students to act as ambassadors of sustainable living. She remarked that planting trees is not merely an activity but a lifelong responsibility towards future generations.

During the programme, Ajay Kumar Uttam, Chairman of Shri Chander Uttam Yoga and Environment Awareness Mission, (NGO) was honoured with an appreciation certificate for his consistent support and contribution

towards environmental awareness initiatives. His organisation has been actively collaborating in promoting eco-friendly practices and community participation in green campaigns.

The plantation drive was organised under the supervision of Darshan Kumar, School Nodal Officer for Mission LiFE and incharge of PM Shri component. In his statement, he highlighted that Mission LiFE is a nationwide movement encouraging individuals and institutions to adopt sustainable lifestyles. He stated, "Environmental protection begins with small, consistent actions at the grassroots level. Schools play a vital role in shaping environmentally conscious citizens. The event concluded with a pledge by students and staff members to continue working for environmental protection and to nurture the planted saplings with responsibility and care.