

DENGUE WARNING SIGNS

Many people with dengue can be cared for at home with adequate rest and hydration. But, if you experience any warning signs, go immediately to the nearest medical center.

Watch out for dengue warning signs!

A drop in body temperature accompanied by any of the following symptoms:

- Headache
- Joint and muscle pain
- Diarrhea
- Present vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Steady run, pain or weakness in one or two limbs
- Redness

If you have any of these symptoms, go to the nearest medical center IMMEDIATELY

JINDRAH IMAGES

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Abrogation of Article 370 completes Sardar Patel's Vision: Amit Shah

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 15

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah today said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi completed Sardar sahab's unfinished work, and by abrogating Article 370, unified Kashmir with India forever. Shah said this while presenting the prestigious 'President's Colour' to the Chhattisgarh Police in Raipur today, marking the first day of his visit to the state.



the immense pride associated with receiving the 'President's Colour', a recognition of great distinction for any armed force. He commended the Chhattisgarh Police for earning this honour within just 25 years of its establishment, reflecting the trust it has garnered from the President. Shah lauded the Chhattisgarh Police as one of the finest forces in the country, renowned for its passion, courage, valour, and dedication. He emphasized that receiving the 'President's Colour' during its silver jubilee year is a testament to the force's relentless hard work, commitment, bravery, and deep connection with the public. He further praised

the Chhattisgarh Police for its exemplary service in maintaining law and order, combating Naxalism, advancing the campaign for a drug-free India, ensuring public safety, and improving the quality of life for the state's citizens. Amit Shah stated that today marks the death anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He remarked that it was Sardar Patel's unparalleled courage and determination that unified the nation. Shah further noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi fulfilled Sardar Patel's unfinished mission by abrogating Article 370, thereby permanently integrating Kashmir with India. He added that the entire nation is paying tribute to Sardar Patel today with deep gratitude. Amit Shah said that

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Omar tells Congress to stop whinging about EVMs, accept poll results

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 15



Opening another point of friction with an important ally, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has dismissed the Congress party's vehement objection to Electronic Voting Machines, and echoed the BJP's defence - you can't accept election results when you win, and blame EVMs when you lose. "When you get a hundred plus members of Parliament using the same EVMs, and you celebrate that as sort of a victory for your party, you can't then a few months later turn around and say... we don't like these EVMs because now the election results aren't going the way we would like them to," Abdullah told PTI in an exclusive interview on Friday. Told that he sounded suspiciously like a BJP spokesman,

Abdullah reacted with "God forbid!" He then added: "No, it's just that... what's right is right." He said he speaks based on principles rather than with partisan loyalty and cited his support for infrastructure projects like the Central Vista as an example of his independent thinking. "Contrary to what everybody else believes, I think that

what's happening with this Central Vista project in Delhi is a damn good thing. I believe constructing a new Parliament building was an excellent idea. We needed a new Parliament building. The old one had outlived its utility," he said. He said parties should not contest elections if they do not trust the voting mechanism. "If you have problems with the EVMs, then you should be consistent in those problems," he said while replying to a question about whether he thinks that the opposition in general and the Congress, in particular, is barking up the wrong tree by focusing on EVMs. After its loss in the Haryana and Maharashtra Assembly polls, the Congress has expressed doubts about the EVM's infallibility and the election outcome. Continued on page 4

Simultaneous election plan will 'Erase' political voice of J&K: PDP's Para

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 15



PDP leader Waheed Para on Sunday said the 'one nation one election' (ONOE) plan directly "threatens" the political, legal and cultural identity of Jammu and Kashmir. The youth president of the PDP said the plan will erase "whatever remains" of the political voice of Jammu and Kashmir. "One Election (ONOE) proposal' This is not just an administrative shift; it directly threatens the political, cultural, and legal identity of Jammu and Kashmir," Para, the MLA from Pulwama, said in a post on his X handle. "Our region has long fought for its distinct voice and identity. The revocation of Article 370 was a blow, and ONOE risks erasing what little

remains of our political voice. At the heart of the issue is the erosion of regional autonomy across India. Jammu and Kashmir has unique issues-like restoration of Article 370 and 35A, the rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits, land rights -that cannot be lumped into national debates," he said. "These concerns will be lost in the national political noise, leaving us with no room to address our specific needs. ONOE threatens to silence our voices, allowing national issues to dominate and

LG Sinha felicitates Langar organizations & NGOs for Amarnath Yatra 2024 services



JI NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DEC 15

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today felicitated the members of Langar Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) participated in offering Food, Langar (Community Kitchen) and other services to pilgrims during Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2024. At a felicitation ceremony held at Resident Commission's

office, the Lieutenant Governor expressed his gratitude to all the stakeholders for their selfless service and making valuable contribution to devotees' well-being during the pilgrimage. "All the individuals and organizations whom we recognize and honour today are real-life contributors to the traditions of selfless service," he said. The Lieutenant Governor said the successful conduct

of Yatra 2024 was a result of the collaborative efforts of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, various government departments and agencies, J&K Police, Security Forces, sewadars, voluntary organisations and civil society groups. He also reiterated the commitment of the Shrine Board for providing quality facilities to the pilgrims to make their pilgrimage a memorable experience. Continued on page 4

Unabated cold wave continues to shiver Kashmir



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 15

The cold wave continues to grip the Kashmir Valley relentlessly, with a slight decrease in night temperatures, which, however, remained below the freezing point, officials said on Sunday. The Meteorological Centre Srinagar said the cold wave will continue over many weather stations of Kashmir valley during the next few days. It said the weather will generally remain dry till December 21, the day the harshest part of the 40-day-long winter "Chilai-e-Kalan" will begin in Kashmir valley. Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, had a low of minus 3.4°C recorded during the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday. This was 2.2°C below normal of 1.2°C during this period of the season for the place. The night temperature at Qazigund slightly improved and recorded at minus 4.0°C

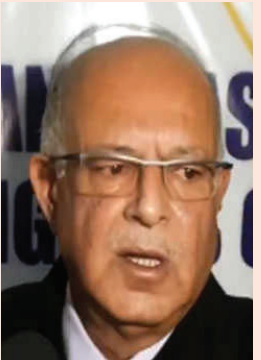
against the minus 5.6°C on the previous night. This was 2.6°C below normal for the gateway town of Kashmir on Srinagar-Jammu National highway during the period. Tourist spot of Pahalgam remained the coldest place at minus 8.4°C a day ago, recorded at minus 4.8°C on Sunday and this was 0.7°C below normal for the valley of shepherds in south Kashmir. Kokernag had a low of 2.8°C against the 4.2°C recorded the previous night and this was 1.3°C below normal for the famous picnic spot of south Kashmir on the day. The night temperature also improved at the ski resort of Gulmarg and recorded at minus 3.8°C against the minus 7.6°C a day ago. This was 1.2°C above normal for the valley of meadow in north Kashmir's Baramulla district on this day. The frontier Kashmir district of Kupwara also recorded below 1.3°C against the normal of minus 1.5°C on Sunday, the MeT office.

Statehood restoration may be done in diluted form: J&K PCC Chief

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 15

Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) Chief Tariq Karra on Sunday expressed concern about the possible restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir in a "diluted form." Speaking on the sidelines of the first working

committee meeting of his Shalteang constituency, held at the party headquarters in Srinagar, Karra voiced his apprehensions to the media. "I am concerned that if statehood is restored to Jammu and Kashmir, it might come with amendments that undermine its original



essence," he said. The J&K PCC President further remarked, "The way the BJP government is approaching the issue of statehood restoration raises fears that it might be granted in a compromised form. I am particularly apprehensive about the bill the Centre plans to introduce in Parlia-

ment-its provisions and the final shape it might take." "...I wish that my apprehensions would not be true", he said. "We will never accept statehood in the amended form", Karra emphasized. In reply to a question, the Congress Continued on page 4

JK Print Media Association Demands Overhaul of Newspaper Advertisement Policies

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15



The JK Print Media Association held an emergency meeting today in Jammu, chaired by President Ravi Khajuria. The meeting was attended by prominent members, including Rajiv Chuni, Satish Poonchi, S.C. Goswami, Chandan Sahib, Manoj Kumar, Tarun Kumar, Abhishek Koushal, Vikas Sharma, Jagdish Choudhary, and others. During the meeting, a thorough discussion was held on various issues affecting newspapers, particularly the current advertisement policies. The association presented several demands, calling for

a comprehensive overhaul of newspaper advertisement rates and policies. The key demands presented by the association include:

- Increasing advertisement rates to Rs. 100 per square centimeter for Black and White advertisements, Rs. 120 per square centimeter for col-

ored inner/last page, and Rs. 150 per square centimeter for front page. This increase is long overdue, considering the rates have been stagnant for the past decade. - Boosting the existing budget for print media, which has not seen a raise in several years. This increase is essential to ensure that print media can continue to operate effectively and provide quality content to its readers. - Ensuring equal value for all empaneled newspapers, regardless of their category. This would ensure that all newspapers receive a fair share of advertisements, promoting a level playing field. Continued on page 4

Pakistani Drone with Narcotics Seized near International Border in Jammu

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

A Pakistani drone carrying nearly half a kg of high-grade narcotic substance was seized by the Border Security Force near the International Border here, officials said on Sunday. The quadcopter entered India from across the border and was seized from the Chinaz Border Outpost area in the Arnia sector late Saturday, they said. Confirming the recovery, a BSF spokesperson said a smuggling attempt was foiled by the alert troops with the successful interception of the Pakistani drone along with 495



grams of narcotic substance at 8.10 pm on Saturday. "The relentless dedication and sharp vigil of BSF Jammu personnel have once again defeated the nefarious design of anti-national elements, showcasing their Continued on page 4

Two Army Jawans injured as their vehicle falls into gorge at Gurez

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 15

Two Army personnel were injured when the vehicle they were travelling in skidded off the road and fell into a gorge at snow bound Gurez road in Jammu Kashmir's Bandipora district on Sunday, officials said. Traffic police officials said the accident occurred at snow bound Zadikushi-Gurez road when the vehicle skidded off the road and rolled down into a gorge causing injuries to two army jawans. The injured jawans have been shifted to nearby Continued on page 4

Congress holds Party Workers Convention of Srinagar District

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 15

The Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) on Sunday held a party workers convention in Srinagar district. The event marked a significant milestone following the party's grand victory in the recent elections. The gathering combined celebratory fervor with strategic discussions, underscoring the party's resolve to deliver on its commitments and address public grievances.

JKPCC Chief and MLA from Central Shalteng constituency, Tariq Hameed Karra, who played a key role in the party's electoral success in Kashmir province, expressed profound gratitude to the voters and supporters.

Speaking at the event, he remarked, "My first priority is to restore the respect, dignity, and honor of my people while safeguarding their constitutional rights and guarantees. The welfare and development of my constituency remain at the forefront of my agenda. I extend heartfelt thanks to all voters and supporters who stood by me through every challenge."

Karra expressed grave concern over the regular calls being made to members of the business community for different types of verifications by CID and CIK, saying, "The harassment of Kashmiri businessmen through unnecessary and repeated verifications is unacceptable. This method of intimidation must stop immediately. Our business community is the backbone of our economy, and their rights need to be safeguarded, not undermined."

Addressing questions from reporters regarding the dual power structure involving the Lieutenant



Governor and the elected government led by Omar Abdullah, Karra strongly criticized the arrangement, "I have consistently opposed this dual power control system. The Central Government is deliberately creating obstacles to undermine the elected government led by NC-Congress. Some officials openly admit they operate under the LG's directives, which is a blatant violation of democratic principles. The BJP's agenda is clear: they are punishing the people of Jammu and Kashmir for rejecting their policies at the ballot box."

Karra further emphasized the need for full statehood restoration, stating, "The restoration of statehood is vital for preserving our dignity, cultural traditions like the Darbar Move, control over land, jobs, and natural resources. Without full statehood, the welfare of our people remains in jeopardy. The Congress Party stands firmly behind the Omar Abdullah-led government, and I will continue to support it unwaveringly."

On bureaucratic inefficiencies and policies, Karra remarked, "The bureaucracy is equally confused by the dual power structure, creating unnecessary hurdles for the elected government. Unfortunately, the first casualty of this inefficiency is the common man,

who has already endured years of hardship." When asked about environmental concerns, Karra expressed alarm, "Unchecked development in the name of progress is compromising our ecology and natural resources. Environmental experts have raised legitimate concerns. Sustainable development must be prioritized to ensure a balance between progress and preservation."

Former MLA Sopore, Haji Abdul Rashid, praised the unwavering support of the people, saying, "This victory is a testament to the trust people have placed in the vision and leadership of JKPCC President Tariq Hameed Karra. We are committed to serving the people with integrity."

Senior Congress leader Nissar Ahmad Mandoo reiterated the party's focus on unity and development, adding, "The Congress Party has always stood for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. This victory strengthens our resolve to fulfill our promises."

Another senior leader, Haji Abdul Gani Khan, described the victory as historic, stating, "This win is not just for the Congress Party but for the people of Kashmir, who deserve progress and justice."

Srinagar District Congress President Irfan Naqeeb commented on

the significance of the victory, saying, "The success in the Central Shalteng constituency is not just a political milestone but a clear message that the people of Srinagar and Jammu & Kashmir stand for justice, development, and dignity. We are committed to ensuring that every voice is heard and every grievance is addressed sincerely."

Congress leader Abid Kashmiri added, "Our victory is one of hope and unity. It sends a strong message that the people of Jammu and Kashmir reject divisive politics and embrace a vision of progress, equality, and justice."

Youth Congress leaders also expressed their enthusiasm and commitment. Dr. Waleed Karra emphasized youth participation: "The energy and vision of the youth are critical for shaping a brighter future. Together, we will work towards progress and inclusivity."

Yasir Mandoo, another youth leader, said, "This victory reflects renewed hope and trust in our leadership. We will not let our people down and will work tirelessly for their welfare."

Maulana Adil Noorani added, "It is time to rebuild Jammu and Kashmir on principles of peace, inclusivity, and mutual respect. Together, we can create a brighter future."

The convention concluded with a pledge from party leaders and workers to prioritize public welfare, sustainable development, and the restoration of constitutional rights in Jammu and Kashmir. The Congress Party reaffirmed its commitment to standing united with the people and working tirelessly for their progress and prosperity.

also included a sumptuous lunch, followed by a guided tour of the hostels and playgrounds, providing the alumni and their families a chance to revisit and relive the unforgettable moments of their school journey.

The School Band delivered a splendid performance at the Drill Square, evoking nostalgia among the alumni as they reminisced about their school days. The event

reaffirmed the enduring bond between the alumni and their alma mater, celebrating the legacy and values of Sainik School Nagrota.

The Ex-Boys' Meet reaffirmed the enduring bond between the alumni and their alma mater, celebrating the legacy and values of Sainik School Nagrota.

Ex-Boys' meet held at Sainik School Nagrota

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

The Annual Ex-Boys' Meet of Sainik School Nagrota was celebrated with great fervour and camaraderie at the School Auditorium. A large number of alumni, accompanied by their families and children, returned to their alma mater to relive cherished memories of their formative years at the institution.

The event commenced with a warm welcome and an introductory address by Capt (IN) Shibu Devasia, the Principal. The gathering was captivated by an exhilarating cultural program presented by the cadets, featuring a fusion dance, a nukkad natak, a traditional Nepali dance, and a mesmerizing musi-



cal performance by the school's renowned music troop, 'The Decibel'.

One of the highlights of the event was the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of the 1992-99 batch, who took to the stage to express their heartfelt gratitude to the school for shaping their lives and presented mementoes as a token of appreciation. Brig Gurmeet Singh Shan, President of NEXAS, addressed

the gathering with inspiring words and presented a token of appreciation to the outgoing Class XII cadets for their outstanding performance in the UPSC NDA Written Examination.

The School Band delivered a splendid performance at the Drill Square, evoking nostalgia among the alumni as they reminisced about their school days. The event

Police organises 3-days workshop on NDPS Act in Kulgam

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KULGAM, DEC 15

Police in Kulgam organised 03-days workshop on the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act for GOs and NGOs at DPO Kulgam, with the aim to enhance the knowledge and skills of police officers in investigating and prosecuting NDPS cases effectively. Deputy Director Prosecution AKS Shri Ghulam Jeelani Dar along with Public Prosecutor (CPO District Kulgam) Shri Ajaz Ahmad Najar and



Public Prosecutor (Court Qazigund) Shri Abdul Bari delivered detailed brief-

ing on various aspects of NDPS act and related laws and procedures to all

GOs, SHOs, IC PPs, IOs of Kulgam police.

SSP Kulgam Shri Sahil Sarangal-IPS present in the sessions urged officers present to refine the investigating skills and to update their knowledge with latest techniques and adopting standard operating procedure during investigation of narcotic drugs (NDPS Act) cases to secure maximum conviction and emphasized the importance of effective enforcement of the NDPS Act to curb the menace of drug abuse and trafficking.

J&K Students Association Seeks CM Omar Abdullah's Intervention Over Harassment of Kashmiri Students in Rajasthan's Mewar University

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

The Jammu and Kashmir Students Association on Sunday called for the immediate and personal intervention of Jammu and Kashmir's Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, to address the harassment and plight of Kashmiri students at Mewar University, Rajasthan.

In a statement, the National Convener of the Association, Nasir Khuehami, said that over 50 Kashmiri students have been facing severe challenges in the university's B.Sc. Nursing program due to the institution's failure to secure mandatory approvals from the Rajasthan Nursing Council (RNC) and the Indian Nursing Council (INC). He emphasized that the absence of these approvals has jeopardized the students' academic futures, leaving them in a state of uncertainty.

"Instead of addressing the students' legitimate concerns and protecting their academic careers, the university has resorted to unjust actions. This is a direct attack on their fundamental rights to demand justice, he said.

Khuehami explained that the association has been closely monitoring the issue for several months. The university administration repeatedly assured the students that the required approvals would be obtained soon. Three months ago, the

university registrar even issued a written assurance, promising a resolution within a short period. However, despite these commitments, no significant progress has been made. Instead, the university has now asked for yet another month to resolve the issue, forcing students to continue their protests.

"The university has been operating the program without the necessary RNC and INC approvals. Students were assured repeatedly that the approvals were forthcoming, but these claims have proven to be baseless and deceptive. Even the chairman of the university had promised a resolution within three months, but all assurances have fallen flat. The students cannot be expected to endure further delays after investing three years of their lives in this program," he added.

Khuehami further alleged that the university has been pressuring students to withdraw their protests, threatening to suspend them and return their fees to the Jammu and Kashmir Student Scholarship Scheme (JKSSS). "It is unacceptable for these students to be sent back after three years of hard work and sacrifice. They are being treated unfairly and deserve justice," he asserted.

He also accused the university of repeatedly involving the Rajasthan police to intimidate the students. "The university has frequently called the

police, who are threatening the students with dire consequences if they continue to protest. Instead of addressing their concerns, they are being silenced with fear tactics," he claimed.

Khuehami pointed out that students had waited until December 4th, as the university claimed the matter was being heard in the Rajasthan High Court. However, despite waiting patiently, no action or follow-up has been taken, leaving the students in limbo. "Now, it is December 15th, and there has been no progress. The future of these young students hangs in the balance," he said.

In a shocking turn of events, on Saturday evening, over 40 Kashmiri students studying at Mewar University were allegedly subjected to physical violence by the Rajasthan police while peacefully protesting. The students were reportedly thrown out of the university premises, forcing them to spend cold winter nights protesting outside the university gates. "These students have been protesting peacefully for months, demanding recognition and certification for their nursing program. However, instead of resolution, they have faced intimidation, violence, and neglect," he added.

The association urged Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to take immediate steps to resolve the issue. "We call upon the

Chief Minister to personally intervene and ensure that these students are not forced to sacrifice their academic careers due to the negligence of Mewar University. These students have placed their trust in the state government, and we believe a swift resolution can restore their hopes for a secure future," Khuehami added.

The association also urged Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma to intervene and resolve this crisis, restoring hope for these young students. "Their future should not be compromised due to administrative negligence and delays," it said.

The National President of the Association, Umam Jamal, also urged both the Chief Ministers to act swiftly. "The demands of the students are straightforward and just: either transfer them to a recognized institution or immediately secure the necessary approvals for their program. The government must prioritize the academic continuity and well-being of these students," he stated.

We urge both state and central governments to ensure mechanisms are in place to protect the rights of Kashmiri students in institutions across the country and ensure that the unwarranted harassment of Kashmiri students at Mewar University Rajasthan, stops. Their futures must not be left at the mercy of negligent universities," Jamal added.

Mahajan Sabha Channi Himmat Organizes Free Medical Camp for Community Welfare

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

Mahajan Sabha Channi Himmat, under the leadership of its President, Shri Vipan Gupta, organized a free medical camp today at Channi Himmat. The camp, held from 10:30 AM to 2:30 PM, saw active participation from the local residents of Channi Himmat and adjoining areas.

The medical camp provided services from two renowned specialists: Dr. Nikhil Mahajan, a Gastroenterologist, and Dr. Javed Iqbal, a Chest Disease Specialist. The initiative successfully served around 125 patients, offering them free consultations and expert medical advice.

Speaking to the media, Shri Vipan Gupta empha-



sized the Sabha's commitment to community welfare, stating, "Mahajan Sabha has consistently worked towards the betterment of society

through such initiatives. Earlier, in March, we organized a Fibro Scan Camp where 160 patients benefitted from the facility. We remain dedicated

to conducting more such programs to ensure the well-being of the people."

Prominent members of the Sabha, including Shri Ashok Gupta, Shri Ashok Jandyal, Shri Mohan gupta, Shri Dalip gupta, Shri Kushvinder gupta, Shri Ankit gupta, Shri Anit gupta Shri Vishavdeep gupta and other esteemed dignitaries, were present during the event, further strengthening the Sabha's mission to serve the community.

The free medical camp was well-received, reflecting the Sabha's ongoing efforts to make healthcare accessible and affordable for all. Shri Vipan Gupta concluded by reiterating Mahajan Sabha Channi Himmat's commitment to organizing more welfare-driven initiatives in the future.

Police arrests 3 drug peddlers in Srinagar, Sopore

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 15

Continuing its efforts to eradicate the menace of drugs from the society, police have arrested 03 drug peddlers in Srinagar & Sopore and recovered contraband substances from their possession.

A Police party of Police Post Urdu Bazar during Naka checking at Budgeer Kawdara crossing arrested two drug peddlers namely Milad Bashir Bhat son of Late Bashir Ahmad Bhat resident of Dolipora Kawdara and Toyab Ahmad Shekh son of Late Mohammad Shafi Sheikh resident of Surnai Mohalla Kawdara. During search, about 16 grams of Charas-like substance and 210 grams of Ganja-like



substance was recovered from their possession. In this connection, case FIR No. 53/2024 under relevant sections of NDPS Act stands registered in Police Station M R Gunj and investigation into the matter has been initiated.

In Sopore, a police party led by incharge Police Post Warpora under the supervision of SDPO Sopore Shri

Sarfaraz Bashir-JKPS and SHO PS Sopore, during naka checking at Dangerpura Crossing apprehended one drug peddler namely Showkat Ahmad Dar son of Habib-ullah Dar resident of Reban Sopore. During search, police party was able to recover 140 grams of charas like substance from his possession. In this regard, a

case vide FIR No. 253/2024 under relevant sections of law has been registered at Police Station Sopore & investigation has been initiated. We kindly appeal to the public to report any instances of drug peddling or other criminal activities they may witness in their surroundings. You can reach out to the nearest police station or call 112 to share information. Tackling the menace of drugs is a collective responsibility, and we urge everyone to support the police in this vital effort to protect our society. Rest assured, the police are committed to taking strict and lawful action against those involved in such activities. Together, we can create a safer, drug-free community.

Healthy and hale lifestyle cornerstone in prevention of cardiovascular diseases: Dr Sushil

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

With the aim of disseminating information regarding prevention of cardiac ailments by adopting a cardiac friendly lifestyle Head Department of Cardiology GMCH Jammu Dr Sushil Sharma conducted a day long cardiac awareness cum health check up camp organized by Shaheedi Committee Jandi in collaboration with Non Gazetted Police Pensioner Welfare forum in memory of Shaheed Amar Jawans at Village Jandi area of Hiranagar, Kathua with sole purpose of educating people about small changes in their dietary and routine habits which can contribute much larger in reducing morbidity and mortality on a vast scale at community level.

While interacting with the people Dr Sushil Stated that Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) remain a leading cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Lifestyle modifications have gained increasing recognition as key interventions in preventing and managing CVDs. A heart-healthy diet plays a critical



role in reducing cardiovascular risk. A heart-healthy diet helps lower levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL). High LDL is a major risk factor for the development of atherosclerosis. By reducing dietary intake of saturated and trans fats, a heart-healthy diet can help maintain optimal cholesterol levels and prevent the formation of plaque. A heart-healthy diet promotes the control of blood pressure, another significant risk factor for CVDs. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products, known as the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, has been shown to effectively lower blood pres-

sure and indirectly reduces the burden of CVD. The AHA recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity per week, along with muscle-strengthening activities at least two days per week and AHA strongly advises against smoking and supports comprehensive smoking cessation programs.

He maintained that screening camps like this one are vital in addressing the growing burden of cardiovascular diseases. They serve as a bridge between healthcare providers and the public, making preventive care accessible and affordable. These ini-

tiatives also play a crucial role in reducing healthcare costs by promoting early detection and prevention, rather than waiting for conditions to progress to more severe stages. By fostering awareness and encouraging proactive lifestyle changes, the camp exemplified how simple yet effective interventions can make a profound difference in preventing cardiovascular diseases. Such initiatives should be scaled up and integrated into broader public health strategies to create healthier communities and reduce the global burden of CVD. As the saying goes, "Prevention is better than cure," and this camp under-

scored the importance of living by this principle to safeguard heart health and overall well-being, He Said.

Management Committee of Shaheedi Committee Jandi Ram Krishan Sharma (Chairman), Durga Dass Sharma , Tirath Ram , Ramesh Lal , Yograj Singh, Surinder Singh, Ramesh Sambhal and Ajeet Singh (President-NGPPWF) appreciated the efforts of Dr Sushil and his team for giving their valuable time and conducted cardiac awareness cum health check up camp at such far flung area and shows their heart felt gratitude

Others who were part of this humane effort includes Dr Sushil Razdan (Neurologist) , Dr K K Pandita , Dr Rajni Razdan , Dr Yashwant Sharma , Dr Dhaneshwar Kapoor , Dr Pallavi , Dr Shivani and Dr Tarsem Singh .Paramedics and volunteers includes Ranjeet Singh, Rajkumar , Vishal Padha, Rohit Nayyar, Maninder Singh, Rahul Sharma , Makhan Sharma, Rajinder Singh , Rahul Vaid , Vikas Kumar , Ravinder Sharma and Nirvair Singh Bali .

Shweta Mittal becomes first women from J&K to win Procam Slam Marathon title

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

Shweta Mittal, Runner, Cyclist & Fitness Enthusiast, has become the first women from Jammu & Kashmir to successfully complete and win the Procam Slam Marathon title on Sunday at Kolkata.

Procam Slam is a running program that recognizes the dedication and hard work of amateur runners who complete four consecutive Procam running events: Tata Mumbai Marathon, TCS World 10K Bengaluru, Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon, and Tata World 25K Kolkata. It is a dream for all the marathoners to conquer the Procam Slam running programme that recognises and rewards great amateur runners for their devotion and hard effort in all Procam International running events. The Procam Slam holds a high significance in the lives of the marathoners which shows unmatched perseverance and dedication throughout the demanding course. To become a Procam Slam Champion, runner needs to complete the appended feature race categories with in the defined finish time cut-off: Marathon in Under 6 hr & 30 mins @ Tata Mumbai Marathon, Open 10K in Under 1 hr 25 mins @ TCS World 10K Bengaluru, Half Marathon in under 3 hr 30 mins @ Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon & 25K Run in under 3 hrs 45 mins @ Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata.

Procam International, Tata Steel Kolkata 25K Run saw Shweta Mittal from Jammu, demonstrated extraordinary perseverance and skill as outstanding athlete. She showcased unwavering passion and dedication. More than 20,000 athletes from vari-



ous parts of the country and abroad joined this prestigious event, making it a remarkable display of sporting camaraderie and excellence. Moreover, Shweta Mittal earned the prestigious titles of "Procam Slam 2024."

SHWETA MITTAL has been continuously participating in marathons across the country for the last few years, with the aim of leading the youth towards sports.

"It was a pride moment for me to participate in such an international event. I believe nothing is difficult if you decide to achieve it," said Shweta Mittal. "We should not participate just to win the race, but participation is much more important than winning. Cycling and running are the best ways to improve your health and refine your endurance" she added.

Shweta Mittal already has a lot more credits to her score by Achieving, Podium Finisher 70.3 Ironman Duathlon

for (03) three consecutive years 2022, 2023 & 2024, Podium Finisher 10k Hearth Marathon 2024, Finisher 42.1k Tata Mumbai Marathon 2024, Finisher 10k TCS Bengaluru 2024, Finisher 21k Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon 2024, Gold medallist 5k, 10k, 400M - J&K Masters Athletic Meet 2023, Gold Finisher HDOR Half Marathon Challenge 2022, Ambassador Ganga Sustainability Run Rishikesh 2022, Gold medallist 800M J&K Masters Athletic Meet 2022, Podium Finisher Jammu marathon 2022, Podium Finisher 35k Ganga Sustainability Run Rishikesh 2022, Podium Finisher Gran Fondo 50k 2022, Podium Finisher Patnitop half marathon 2022, Podium Finisher Katra half marathon 2022, 26k Republic Day Flag Run 2022, Cycling Brevet De Randonneur Mondiaux (BRM) 200k Ride 2021, Finisher Duathlon by Eco-cycleture 75k ride + 7.5k run 2021, Many Half Marathons and 10k Runs.

Indian Army Organised National Integration Day Celebrated for Local Youth at Sanjiot, Rajouri



RAJOURI: 15 DEC 2024

National Integration Day was celebrated with fervor at Sangiot, Bhata Dhurian. The event symbolized the spirit of cooperation, solidarity, and collaboration between the Indian Army and the local populace. It featured cultural and social awareness performances by young students, along with the distribution of sewing machines, blankets, mat-

resses, and medicines to families without a source of income. Stationery items and volleyballs were also distributed to young students in recognition of their participation in the event. The local populace not only appreciated the efforts of the Indian Army but also expressed gratitude to the troops. They conveyed their day-to-day issues and practical requirements to the armed forces.

Indian Army Organised Drawing and Painting Competition for Children at Lam, Rajouri



JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, DEC 15

The Indian Army organized a Drawing and Painting Competition at Government Middle School, Jabber, in district Rajouri, with the aim of fostering a spirit of healthy competition, encouraging academic excellence, and promoting knowledge sharing among students. A total of 55 students from various age groups participated in the competition. To ensure maximum participation, the event was conducted for students

in the 1st to 5th class category. The students, who had been preparing rigorously for weeks, displayed great enthusiasm and zeal during the event. All participants showcased their artistic skills on various themes, demonstrating creativity and imagination through their artwork. Prizes were awarded to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd position holders. The teachers and participants appreciated the Indian Army for providing this valuable opportunity to display their artistic skills and talent.

Training Program on Embracing Behavioral Skills for Workplace Effectiveness Commences at SMVDU

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

The School of Business at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU) inaugurated a three-day training program titled "Embracing Behavioral Skills for Workplace Effectiveness" for Shrine Board employees scheduled from 12th-14th Dec, 24, with the participation of 30 attendees. Prof. Jyoti Sharma welcomed the participants and emphasized the importance of the program in fostering workplace harmony and enhancing professional capabilities. The first session, conducted by Prof. Suparn Sharma, focused on emotional intelligence. Dr. Shazia Bukhari conducted sessions on attitude and interpersonal skills, while Mr. Sumanta Sarthi Sharma provided valuable insights into mindful self-regulation. Dr. Arti Maini will discuss the significance of effective listening and life positions in shaping workplace behavior. Further sessions include exercises on behavioral harmony and the importance of gratitude at the workplace, facilitated by Dr. Rashi Taggar. Dr. Jyoti Sharma will address resilience building as a crucial component of behavioral skills. The program also features contributions from external experts, including Prof. Manoj Aggarwal from IIT-Jammu, who will elaborate on strategies to avoid and manage conflicts in the workplace, and Mr. Ajay Khajuria, who will highlight the role of constructive criticism in enhancing behavioral skills. Planned and coordinated by the faculty members of the School of Business under the guidance of Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Pragati Kumar, this initiative aims to develop critical skills among executives, reaffirming SMVDU's commitment to professional excellence.

Indian Army Organised Lecture on 'How to Join Armed Forces' at Kotranka, Rajouri



JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, DEC 15

A lecture on career opportunities and how to join the armed forces was organized by the Indian Army at Government Model Higher Secondary School, Kotranka. The aim of this motivational talk was to encourage talented and potential students to plan their careers in the armed forces based on their respective inclinations, interests, and the various opportunities available. During the session, students were briefed about the selection procedure for becoming an officer in the armed forces. This initiative is a unique step by

the Indian Army towards winning the hearts and minds of the local population. A total of 65 people attended the talk, including 4 teachers and 61 students (35 girls and 26 boys). The Indian Army has been working with the local youth expressed their profound gratitude towards the Indian Army for organizing this motivational talk and taking such a noble initiative to inspire talented students to consider a career in the armed forces. This effort is expected to have a lasting impact on the overall development of the students.

Indian Army Conducts Empowerment Interaction for Gujjar and Bakkarwals at Saidbaker, Poonch



JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DEC 15

The Indian Army organized an interaction with the Gujjar and Bakkarwal communities at Saidbaker. This initiative was part of ongoing efforts to extend the area of domination patrols and address local concerns. The meeting served as a platform for informal interaction, easing local tensions, and discussing the prevailing security situation. It pro-

vided residents with an opportunity to openly share the challenges they face living in remote regions. The Gujjar and Bakkarwal communities appreciated the Indian Army's efforts in promoting medical care, education, and sports activities in the region. The key highlight of the meeting was the emphasis on the role of the Indian Army and the Awam working together to fight against terrorism in the region.

Pankaj Sharma delivers a powerful solo act on marriage and reconciliation

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 15-12-2024

Natrang today presented a new play "Yeh Meri Wife Hai" as part of its popular weekly theatre series "Sunday Theatre" at Natrang Studio Theatre, Jammu. The play, written by Azra Choudhary and Pankaj Sharma, was also directed and performed by Pankaj Sharma, who showcased his acting prowess by skillfully enacting multiple roles as the sole performer. Pankaj Sharma is one of the senior actors of Natrang who has dedicated over 35 years to the service of the theatre. Known for brilliant comedy performances in the plays like Ghumayee, Kanjoos, Bagia Bancha Ram Ki and Saiyan Bhaye Kotwal, Pankaj always mesmerises audiences with his outstanding histrionics.

Presented in Hindustani, the play compellingly highlights the shifting paradigms of husband-wife relationships, transitioning from early affectionate years to the challenges and bitterness that arise due to family responsibilities, financial pressures, and changing priorities.

The storyline focuses on Som Nath, a middle-class man, and his wife as they navigate the trials of married life. Initially filled with joy, affection, and companionship, their relationship begins to deteriorate with the increasing pressures of raising chil-



dren and managing daily routines. Misunderstandings and conflicts gradually consume their bond, and years are wasted in blame and regret. However, with time and after their children settle in life, the couple finally reconciles and rediscovers happiness, realizing the importance of mutual understanding and shared responsibilities.

The play draws inspiration from Rolin Foreman's "A Play of Fools" and creatively reimagines the themes of love, struggle, and rediscovery in relationships. Pankaj Sharma's solo performance brought depth and emotion to the narrative, allowing the audience to connect with the universal challenges and triumphs of married life. His powerful portrayal of multiple characters kept the viewers engaged while evoking introspection on the complexities of human relationships.

The play was supported

by Neeraj Kant, who executed the lighting design with precision, enhancing the emotional and dramatic tone of the performance. The show was efficiently coordinated by Mohd Yaseen.

Natrang's Sunday Theatre series continues its legacy of presenting thought-provoking and engaging performances that reflect societal themes and human emotions. By providing a platform for artists to showcase their creativity and talent, Natrang reinforces its commitment to promoting meaningful theatre and cultural enrichment in the region. The play "Yeh Meri Wife Hai" captivated the audience with its relatable narrative and heartfelt message, leaving a lasting impact. It reminded viewers of the significance of love, understanding, and reconciliation in navigating the inevitable challenges of life and relationships.

Speaker Legislative Assembly inspects healthcare facilities at Char-i-Sharief

JJ NEWS SERVICE
BUDGAM, DECEMBER 15

Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, today inspected functioning of several healthcare institutions in Char-i-Sharief to assess the infrastructural facilities and overall medicare being provided to the local population.

During the visit, the Speaker inspected SDH Nagam, PHC Nowpora, PHC Dada-Ompora, PHC Kanir, CHC Kremshore and had on spot assessment of medical care services focusing mainly on functioning of essential health services, cleanliness, patient care and availability of necessary medical equipment and medicines.

During the inspection, the Speaker interacted with medical staff and healthcare providers to understand challenges



they face on routine basis. He assured them due enhancement in infrastructure and other facilities to meet the growing healthcare needs of local populace.

The Speaker, during the tour, also interacted with the patients and their attendants to understand their concerns. He also took appraisal about the quality of medical care services being available at the facilities.

At SDH Nagam, the locals raised several issues and demands before the Speaker like construction of retention wall behind the hospital as well as a

boundary wall, installation of digital X-ray facility, deployment of ultrasound specialist, biodegradable medical waste management shed, installation of lift facility and oxygen generation plant besides macadamization of hospital approach road.

While interacting with the locals, the Speaker assured them that all of these issues and demands will be addressed promptly.

Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Director Health Services Kashmir and other district and Health officers were present during the visit.

JKRLM's 3-day Ashakari mela showcases rich cultural heritage at Kalakendra

JJ NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 15

The vibrant 3-day Ashakari Mela, organized by the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Livelihood Mission (JKRLM) under the Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, is in full swing at Kalakendra, Jammu.

The event celebrates the rich cultural heritage, craftsmanship and culinary traditions of Jammu and Kashmir, attracting a large number of visitors.

The Mela features a wide range of traditional crafts, artisanal goods, and regional delicacies, offering a unique platform for skilled women artisans and craftspeople to showcase their talents.

Dynamic live demonstrations of crafts such as pottery, grass handicrafts, Basohli art and intricate Crewel and Sozni embroidery have been the highlight of the event, capturing the spirit of rural



artistry and the cultural legacy of the region.

The event became a focal point for promoting the cultural richness of Jammu and Kashmir, while also fostering economic empowerment for women artisans.

The Ashakari Mela will continue till December 16, providing an enriching experience for all and serving as a testament to the vibrant traditions of Jammu and Kashmir.

Mission Director JKRLM, Dr. Shubhra Sharma, highlighted the empowerment of women artisans through this ini-

tiative. She said, "Platforms like the Ashakari Mela enable women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to display their handcrafted products, connect with the public and gain confidence. This event provides a glimpse into the vibrant culture of J&K while giving SHG members an opportunity to shine."

Dr. Sharma also emphasized the dual benefit of the Mela, for visitors, it is a chance to explore and purchase unique handmade items, while for artisans, it serves as a valuable avenue for recognition and economic growth.

Jammu Police tightens noose on drug peddlers: Husband and Wife arrested with 28 Grams of Heroin under operation Sanjeevani

JJ NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

In a strong action against drug trafficking, the District Police Jammu apprehended two notorious drug peddlers, Rahul Singh Jamwal and his wife Shagun Chandel alias Tannu Jamwal, residents of Rama Channi. During a routine patrolling and naka (checkpoint) operation in the Channi Himmat area, police recovered 28 grams of heroin (locally known as "Chitta") from their possession.

A case under FIR No. 171/2024 has been registered at the Channi Himmat Police Station under Sections 8/21/22 of the NDPS Act. The authorities have initiated further investigations to uncover the forward and backward linkages of the arrested individuals.

The operation was executed under the supervision of Inspector Shariq Bhat (SHO Channi Himmat) and Sh. Sheezan Bhat (SDPO City East), with overall guidance from Sh. Ajay Sharma (SP South).

In an effort to strengthen public participation, the SSP Jammu urged citizens to join hands with the police in the ongoing anti-narcotics campaign. He assured that any information related to drug abuse or peddling shared with the police will be kept confidential. Citizens can contact the helpline number 9541951100 to report such activities.

The District Police Jammu remains committed to its mission of safeguarding the youth and ensuring a drug-free society.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

Abrogation of Article 370...

the longstanding demand for the creation of Chhattisgarh was fulfilled by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The Home Minister expressed confidence that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chhattisgarh will be completely free of Naxalism by March 31, 2026.

He emphasized that the Modi government is committed to eradicating Naxalism not only from Chhattisgarh but also from other states across the country. He acknowledged the bravery of the Chhattisgarh Police in advancing towards this goal and highlighted the significant achievements made in the fight against Naxalism over the past year.

Amit Shah stated that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, significant progress has been made in the fight against Naxalism over the past year. Security forces have neutralized 287 Naxalites, arrested 1,000, and facilitated the surrender of 837 Naxalites. He noted that among those neutralized, 14 were top-ranking Naxal leaders. Shah highlighted that for the first time in four decades, the death toll of civilians and security personnel due to Naxal violence has fallen below 100, attributing this to the Modi government's stringent policies against Naxalism. He further stated that over the last decade under PM Modi's leadership, Naxalism has been effectively curbed, resulting in a 73% reduction in security personnel casualties and a 70% decline in civilian deaths compared to the previous decade. The Home Minister also commended the Chhattisgarh Police for joining forces with other security agencies to deliver a decisive blow to Naxalism in the past year. Additionally, he pointed out that several developmental projects have been carried out in Chhattisgarh under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

Amit Shah stated that the first 'President's Colour' was awarded to the Indian Navy in 1951, and today, any armed force must complete 25 years of service to be eligible for this prestigious honour. He expressed gratitude to the President of India for recognizing and honoring the 25 years of service, dedication, sacrifice, and commitment of the Chhattisgarh Police.

The Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation stated that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Central Government and the State Government are committed to completely eliminating Naxalism from Chhattisgarh by March 31, 2026. He urged Naxalites to abandon the path of violence, join the mainstream of society, and contribute to the development of Chhattisgarh by moving forward on the path of progress.

Amit Shah stated that the Chhattisgarh Police has achieved significant success in combating organized crime and narcotics with determination. He highlighted that between January 1, 2024, and September 30, 2024, around 1,100 narcotics cases were registered, leading to the seizure of 21,000 kilograms of cannabis, 6,000 kilograms of opium, and approximately 195,000 tablets of illicit drugs. Additionally, 1,400 individuals were arrested in connection with these cases. He further noted that Chhattisgarh has been at the forefront in the effective implementation of the PITNDPS (Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) Act.

Union Home Minister expressed confidence that every officer and personnel of the Chhattisgarh Police will play a pivotal role in realizing the vision of a developed Chhattisgarh and a prosperous Bastar. He further stated that Chhattisgarh's significant contribution will be etched in golden letters in the journey towards building a developed India by 2047 under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

The Union Home Minister told the personnel of the Chhattisgarh Police that the 'President's Colour' is not merely a decoration but a symbol of service, sacrifice, and dedication. He stated that this insignia serves as a reminder of the countless challenges that must be faced with resilience.

Amit Shah emphasized that the 'President's Colour' is not only an honor but also a responsibility, and every officer of the Chhattisgarh Police will uphold this responsibility and will not take a step back in fulfilling their duty.

Omar tells Congress...

It has demanded a return to the paper ballot. Abdullah's comments add to his National Conference

party's unhappiness with the Congress, which was allied with it during the September Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

NC officials have privately said that the Congress did not do its bit during the campaigning and left all the heavy lifting to them. Still, the NC won 42 seats in the 90-member Assembly, and the Congress got six.

The chief minister emphasised that electoral machines remain the same regardless of the election outcome, and parties should not use them as a convenient excuse for defeat.

"One day voters choose you, the next day they don't," he said and gave his own example of facing defeat in Lok Sabha polls while winning a majority in the September assembly polls.

"I never blamed the machines," he said.

Simultaneous election...

undermining our region's distinctiveness," he said. Para said the regional parties are crucial in representing the needs of the people but the ONOE will suppress their voice.

"Our regional parties, are crucial in representing the needs of our people.

With ONOE, their voices will be drowned out by the resources of national parties that have little interest in our issues. The rehabilitation of displaced persons, tribal rights, and local governance concerns will become secondary.

"Jammu and Kashmir is a region of diverse political and cultural identities. Both Jammu, and Kashmir have different needs and priorities. Holding state and national elections together would only deepen divisions," he said.

Para said the national politics often fail to reflect the regional realities.

"National policies often fail to reflect our realities, and ONOE would exacerbate this gap, leading to governance challenges and policy deadlocks. Our region's complex geography, security issues, and administrative strains make it difficult enough to hold elections under normal circumstances," he said.

The MLA said managing both state and national elections would stretch resources thin, leading to delays, disenfranchisement, and potential electoral errors.

"Finally, the legal complications of ONOE are substantial. The revocation of Article 370 and subsequent reorganization have left unresolved legal questions. Introducing synchronised elections in this volatile environment would further complicate constitutional questions.

"For Jammu and Kashmir, One Nation, One Election represents disempowerment to our identity, political autonomy, and future. This is not the reform we need. We need policies that respect our unique challenges and preserve our local governance," he added. (Agnities)

LG Sinha felicitates...

"Shri Amarnath Ji yatra is a symbol of our rich spiritual and cultural heritage. The aim of Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board and all those associated with Langar Seva work is to make the holy pilgrimage divine and hassle free. It is the responsibility of all of us to put all our energy into this noble cause," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor further spoke on the infrastructural development including widening of road, upgradation of various facilities for the safe and smooth conduct of the yatra.

He observed that additional cloak-rooms were made functional at Holy Cave and Lower Holy Cave. As many as 122 Langars provided free of cost food and prasad to the yatis during Yatra 2024 along both the Yatra routes. This included 47 Langars/NGOs along Baltal axis, 14 in Sangam & Holy Cave area, 59 on Pahalgam axis and 2 in Srinagar Yatri Niwas. Social organizations were also engaged in providing free fodder service at Pahalgam and Poshpathri, operationalization of free of cost battery car service on Baltal route and distribution of the safety helmets to yatis in Yatra stretches vulnerable to shooting stones, he said.

He said the disaster preparedness, decongestion of Holy Cave and Lower Holy Cave area was successfully undertaken prior to the commencement of Yatra 2024.

For the safety and convenience of pilgrims and langar sewadars, it was ensured that langars were set up only in demarcated safer zones at Holy Cave and Lower Holy Cave and langar sewadars were allowed in the yatra area with valid RFID cards only, the Lieutenant Governor further added.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised that all langar organisations and voluntary organisations should strive to provide high quality of service to the pilgrims.

K.N Rai, Member, Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB); Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, CEO, SASB; KK Sharma, Member, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board; Dr Rashmi Singh, Principal Resident Commissioner, J&K; Rahul Singh, Additional CEO, SASB, representatives of langar and social organisations were present.

Statehood restoration...

leader said "the dual power system is very detrimental for the people of Jammu and Kashmir" alleging "I know it is not in the national interest and I know that certain forces are perpetrating it".

"It seems the BJP has pledged not to listen to anything from the people of Jammu and Kashmir", Karra said, adding "What kind of sins the people of Jammu and Kashmir have committed and being punished for".

"I urge the central government not to fuel the fire. They are trying to create unrest in Jammu and Kashmir under the present system", he said.

The PCC Chief said the employees didn't know with which power they belong in the government system either with the elected government or under the Lieutenant Governor Powers.

"I have been often saying the people of Jammu and Kashmir are suffering especially the poor ones in the present system", he said.

Karra alleged it seems those people (outside bureaucrats) have come here for a picnic and torturing the people.

JK Print Media Association...

- Accrediting editors whose newspapers are empaneled with DIPR for advertisements. This would help establish credibility and trust in the advertisement process.

- Restarting advertisements for newspapers that were previously empaneled but had their advertisements stopped, along with the payment of outstanding dues. This is a matter of justice, as these newspapers should not be penalized for reasons beyond their control.

The association also expressed concern over the dormant newspaper empanelment committee meeting, which was previously held bi-annually. The association demands that this committee convene immediately to address the long-standing issue of empaneling newspapers that have consistently published for many years.

To further press their demands, the association plans to meet with key stakeholders, including government officials, advertisers, and other relevant parties, to garner support for their cause.

"We urge the authorities to take our demands seriously and take immediate action to address these long-standing issues," said Ravi Khajuria, President of the JK Print Media Association. "We believe that our demands are reasonable and necessary to ensure the survival and success of print media in our region."

The JK Print Media Association represents the interests of print media outlets in Jammu and Kashmir. The association works to promote the welfare of its members, advocate for their rights, and address issues affecting the print media industry.

Pakistani Drone with...

unwavering commitment to the nation's security," the official said in a statement.

Two Army Jawans...

hospital for treatment, they said.

As soon as the accident occurred, Army and civil authorities started a rescue operation amid accumulated snow and freezing temperature to move the injured to the hospital, the officials said and added more details will follow.

KPDCL condoles death of youth due to electric shock, orders probe

JJ NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 15

Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) has condoned the death of a youth who received an electric shock on 14th of December, 2024 in Kurosoo Rajbagh and later passed away in a nearby hospital.

The said worker was engaged by M/S Gopikrishna Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd, the Turnkey Contractor (TKC) of RDSS scheme.

Meanwhile, a high level committee has been constituted by Chief Engineer (Distribution-KPDCL) comprising Superintending Engineer O&M Circle 2nd Srinagar, Executive Engineer ED 2nd Srinagar and Assistant Executive Engineer, Sub Division Rajbagh to thoroughly investigate the events which led to this unfortunate accident.

The committee has been asked to submit a detailed report within 3 days.

One-Week Faculty Development Programme on "Science and Technology for Sustainable Future" Concluded in CU Jammu

JJ NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

One Week Faculty Development Programme (FDP) entitled as 'Science and Technology for Sustainable Future' under the guidance and mentorship of Prof. Sanjeev Jain, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Central University of Jammu was successfully concluded in Department of Zoology in collaboration with Madan Mohan Malviya Teacher Training Centre, CU Jammu. The University had a privilege to invite Prof Ashok Kumar Mohanty, Director, CIRC, ICAR, Meerut for keynote address in which he deliberated on the topic 'Introduction to proteomics and Applications in biomarker Discovery. About four sessions were being conducted per day for consecutive six days and concluded successfully on today. This program aimed to enhance faculty members' expertise by exploring innovative approaches to sustainable practices in science and technology. Over the six days, the FDP hosted 24 distinguished resource persons, including 2-3 Indian experts who joined from abroad, providing global perspectives and valuable insights on sustainable development. The sessions covered topics ranging from the "Role of proteomics in biomarker discovery, Research & Development in Higher Education Institutions," 'Artificial Intelligence and Sustainable Future', 'Botanical Tourism', 'Patents and copyright' 'Sustainable practices and human health' and 'Sustainable Healthcare Through Computational Innovations in Drug Discovery and Vaccinology,' underscoring the importance of computational biology in modern healthcare solutions.

The Valedictory Session, held in the evening, was graced by prominent speakers, including Dr. Neelika Arora (Director, UGC-MMTTC), Dr. Ashok Kumar Yadav (Head, Department of Zoology), Dr. Akshay Kumar, and Dr. Anjali Dhar (Coordinator, FDP). The session began with a warm summary of the week's activities, during which Dr. Neelika Arora commended the efforts of all stakeholders and praised the program's success in fostering impactful discussions on sustainable scientific practices. Dr. Ashok Kumar Yadav extended his gratitude to the speakers, particularly those who joined from abroad, for their invaluable contributions that broadened the perspectives of participants. He emphasized the importance of integrating global innovations into local academic practices to address the sustainable challenges. Dr. Akshay Kumar reflected on the key highlights of the program, appreciating the variety of thought-provoking topics such as sustainability, artificial intelligence, and healthcare innovations.

In her closing remarks, Dr. Anjali Dhar expressed heartfelt appreciation to the organizing committee, speakers, and participants for their active involvement and commitment. She encouraged everyone to apply the knowledge gained during the FDP to drive meaningful change in their curriculum.

Massive protest in Hiranagar for Cow Protection Laws

JINNEWS SERVICE
HIRANAGAR, DEC 15

A massive rally and protest, organized under the banner of Movement Kalki, took place today in Hiranagar, from Sultanpur Chowk to Hiranagar Bazaar. The protest marked the 56th consecutive day of an ongoing movement aimed at declaring cows as the National Mother, enforcing stricter anti-cow trafficking laws, forming a Sanatan Board, and ensuring proper construction and maintenance of cowsheds.

The rally saw the participation of local citizens, social activists, women's groups, cow protection organizations, and representatives from various religious and political bodies. Addressing the gathering, MLA Vijay Sharma issued a strong warning to cow traffickers, emphasizing the need for immediate action. "We treat all communities as brothers, but



if cow trafficking does not stop, society will reject you. Strict laws against cow slaughter are essential. If the government fails to act, the movement will intensify further," he said. Kaushal Sharma, President of the Cow Protection Organization, expressed disappointment over the government's inaction. "Hundreds of cows have been rescued from traffickers, but without stricter laws, the problem persists. If action isn't taken, people will

find their own solutions," he stated. Women's groups, including Monica Sharma and Sapna Kohli, highlighted the cultural and religious significance of cows, vowing to continue their fight for stricter laws. Pritam Sharma, Advisory Board Member of Movement Kalki, called for urgent legal reforms, stating, "This movement is about the revival of Dharma and the unification of society. If the government does not act, this voice will only

grow louder." The protest has gained significant momentum, with day-and-night demonstrations ongoing at Ambphala Chowk in Jammu. Organizers of Movement Kalki have conducted numerous rallies, public meetings, and awareness campaigns across the region. They have pledged to sustain their efforts until their demands are met, emphasizing that protecting cows is crucial to safeguarding cultural and religious values.

Pathania calls for unity against extremism at Manwal event

JINNEWS SERVICE
MANWAL, DEC 15

In a stirring address at a massive civil society gathering held in Manwal, Mr. Ranbir Singh Pathania, Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Udhampur East, underscored the importance of unity and vigilance in the face of rising extremism and societal polarization. Speaking at the annual day celebration of Brahmashri Bawara Vidyapeeth School, Pathania called on the people of India to stand strong against divisive forces that aim to fracture the nation's social fabric.



In his speech, Pathania pointed to the global rise of extremism, citing the tragic situations in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Syria as stark reminders of the dangers posed by such forces. He emphasized how the fall of democratic systems in these nations has led to widespread instability, violence, and the erosion of individual freedoms. Pathania warned that while these events have unfolded thousands of miles away, India must remain ever vigilant, ensuring that such extremism does not take root on its soil.

"The turmoil we see in Afghanistan, where the Taliban has once again taken control, shows how extremism can destroy a nation's stability," said Pathania. "In Syria, the ongoing conflict fueled by sectarian violence has led to immense human suffering. Bangladesh, too, has faced political instability that has deepened societal divides. These examples remind us that when division takes hold, it erodes peace and progress. We are a secular nation where people of all faiths, castes, and creeds have the right to live together in peace and harmony. We must protect this ethos from all those who seek to divide us."

Pathania also emphasized that India's role as a global leader in peace and coexistence must be bolstered by a commitment to internal unity. "Shanti ke liye Shakti bhi jaroori hai," he quoted, stressing that

while peace is essential, the strength to defend that peace is equally crucial. He called for a collective effort to uphold the secular and inclusive values that form the bedrock of Indian society, asserting that no one should be allowed to claim superiority or preference on the basis of religion, caste, or creed.

Turning to the educational values being promoted at Brahmashri Bawara Vidyapeeth, Pathania lauded the school for its dedication to preserving India's cultural heritage. He praised the school's curriculum, which emphasizes the teachings of the Vedas and the nurturing of *sanskars*—values that instill respect for tradition, ethics, and social harmony. According to Pathania, the school's holistic approach to education, which combines academic excellence with a deep-rooted understanding of Indian history and

culture, is an exemplary model for shaping future leaders who will carry forward India's legacy of peace and unity.

"The essence of the Vedas lies in their timeless wisdom, which continues to guide humanity toward righteousness, peace, and knowledge," Pathania remarked. "The teachings of the Vedas are not confined to the past; they provide us with enduring principles that can help navigate the complexities of the modern world. In addition, by integrating *sanskars* into the education system, Brahmashri Bawara Vidyapeeth ensures that students grow not only intellectually, but also morally and spiritually."

Pathania's address concluded with a call to action for all citizens to work together to combat the forces of extremism and polarization. He reaffirmed that the strength of India lies in its unity and diversity, and that the nation must always strive to protect its secular, inclusive, and peaceful ideals. "We must stand united, defend our shared values, and ensure that India remains a beacon of peace, respect, and coexistence in the world," he said.

Final Match of the Brigadier Usman Cricket Tournament will be Played between Sunderbani and Poonch

JINNEWS SERVICE
NOWSHERA, DEC 15

The Brigadier Usman SPPR inter District Tehsil Cricket Tournament organized by the Indian Army at the Sports Stadium Nowshera for the last seven days, the semi-final match was played on Sunday morning between Sunderbani and Reasi in which the Sunderbani team won the toss and decided to bat first. Sunderbani succeeded in making a competitive score of 166/8 in 18 overs. Reasi team did a good run chase but was all out at 158 in 17.5 overs. Sunderbani's team emerged victorious and defeated Reasi by 8 runs and reached the final. In this match, man of the match was Vikas Anand Sunderbani, best fielder



was Malik Mohammad Aslam Reasi, best catch was Ranjeet Singh Sunderbani, most sixes was hit by Ranjeet Singh Sunderbani. On Sunday afternoon itself, the second semi-final match was played between Poonch and Rajouri in which Poonch team won the toss and decided to bat first and was all out at 130 runs in

17.3 overs. Rajouri team was successful in making a score of 116/9 in 18 overs. In which the winning team of Poonch defeated Rajouri by 14 runs and reached the final. In this match, Man of the Match was Mohammad Arif Poonch, Best fielder was Mohammad Imran Poonch, Best catch was Yasir Hussain Rajouri, Most sixes were hit by

Faizan Bhat Poonch. Players of all the teams participating in the Brigadier Usman Cricket Tournament performed brilliantly and tried to make their team reach the final and return by winning prize money and trophy by playing the last match. A total of eight teams participated in this cricket tournament in which the team of Sunderbani and Poonch reached the end, between whom the final match will be played after a few days. Every day a large number of spectators gathered to watch the match in the Sports Stadium Nowshera people enjoyed this cricket tournament to the fullest, people supported this Brigadier Usman Cricket Tournament organized by the Indian Army.

Masters' Badminton Tournament-2024 inaugurated at Police Line Badminton Hall, Jammu

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

The Jammu and Kashmir Police, in collaboration with the Badminton Association of J&K, inaugurated the Masters' Badminton Tournament-2024 at the Police Line Badminton Hall, Gulshan Ground, Jammu.

Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Jammu zone, Shri Anand Jain, IPS, graced the inaugural ceremony as the Chief Guest. Shri Gulzar Singh Slathia, former IGP, was the Guest of Honour on the occasion. Shri Balbir Jamwal, General Secretary, Badminton Association of Jammu and Kashmir also graced the occasion.

Speaking at the event, ADGP Anand Jain applauded the players for their



active participation and highlighted the importance of sports in promoting a healthy lifestyle and keeping society away from the menace of drugs. He emphasized that such tournaments not only encourage physical fitness but also foster unity and camaraderie among participants.

The inaugural day witnessed enthusiastic participation from around

100 Master Badminton players representing various districts of Jammu and Kashmir. The matches were conducted under the supervision of Sukhdev Singh, in-charge of the Police Line Badminton Hall, with officiation by Anil Gurkha, Sunil Gurkha, and S. Saravanan. The tournament promises exciting matches in the

coming days, reflecting the spirit of sportsmanship and the dedication of the players.

The tournament serves as a platform to promote sportsmanship, camaraderie, and a spirit of healthy competition among the players, reaffirming the commitment of Jammu and Kashmir Police to encourage sports and community engagement.

62nd Foundation Day of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan Celebrated with Zeal and Fervour

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

The 62nd Foundation Day of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan was celebrated on 14th December 2024 at Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 2, Akhnoor. The event began with a warm green welcome for the chief guest, followed by a melodious welcome song performed by the young students.

An excellent rendition of Kendriya Vidyalaya's spirited anthem, "Bharat ka Swarnim Gaurav Kendriya Vidyalaya Layega", added to the vibrance of the occasion.

The program commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by the chief guest, Lieutenant Colonel (Officer Commanding) Mr. Neeraj Puri, and the school principal, Mr. Amit Walter, amidst a serene atmosphere of Vedic chants. A variety of



colorful cultural performances by the students made the event memorable.

As the chief guest, Lieutenant Colonel Mr. Neeraj Puri highly appreciated the program. While extending his wishes for the Foundation Day, he encouraged the teachers and students to continue excelling in academics and co-curricular activities.

The cultural presentations included various dance dramas, reflecting the diversity of India's states.

The alumni of Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 2, Akhnoor, also shared their experiences and insights. Miss Priya Sharma, currently undergoing training in the Kashmir Administrative Service, spoke about the creativity and excellence of Kendriya Vidyalayas,

emphasizing the importance of setting clear goals for students. Similarly, National Defence Academy cadet Aryan Sharma inspired the youth to serve the nation with pride and enthusiasm.

In his address, Principal Mr. Amit Walter highlighted the significance of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, established under the Ministry of Education, Government of India. He proudly shared that it is the largest centrally controlled chain of government schools in India, with 1,256 schools, including three international branches in Moscow, Tehran, and Kathmandu. He also mentioned the government's recent approval to open 85 new Kendriya Vidyalayas.

The program concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by senior teacher Mr. Kamalchandra Shukla.

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
JAL SHAKTI (IRRIGATION & FLOOD CONTROL) DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER IRRIGATION DIVISION NO.II JAMMU
E-Mail: ifcmjuxenid2@gmail.com, xenirrigation-div2@jk.gov.in, Tel/Fax: 0191-2457756

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING E- TENDERS

E-NIT No.: 23 of 12/2024-25
For and on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Executive Engineer Irrigation Division No-II, Jammu invites e-tenders in two cover system Cover 1st containing prequalification documents and Cover 2nd containing Price Bid from registered contractors of appropriate Class for the below mentioned works:

S. No	Name of work	Advertised cost of work (Rs. in lacs)	Earnest Money Deposit (in Rs)	Time for completion (in days)	Class of Contractor	Cost of Tender Documents (Rs.)
1.	Silt clearance of Musa Chak Minor of D-10 of MRC from RD 20 to 2150 Mtr	1.13	02 % of the Advertised Cost	10	B,C,D	200
2.	Silt clearance of Katyal Minor of D-10A of D-10 of MRC from RD 03 to 3650 Mtr	2.91	-do-	15	A,B,C,D	200
3.	Silt clearance of Samka Minor of D-10A of D-10 of MRC from RD 0 to 2200 Mtr	1.58	-do-	10	B,C,D	200
4.	Silt clearance of Khanna Chak Minor of D-10A of D-10 of MRC from RD 5 to 5400 Mtr	4.43	-do-	25	A,B,C,D	200
5.	Silt clearance of Chandu Chak Minor of D-10A of D-10 of MRC from RD 8 to 4850 Mtr	4.01	-do-	25	A,B,C,D	200
6.	Desilting of Khour Branch of D-11 of Main Ranbir Canal from RD 0 to 4500 Mtr	6.16	-do-	30	A,B,C,D	500
7.	Silt clearance of Biaspur Minor of D-11 of MRC from RD 0 to 5000 Mtr	4.88	-do-	25	A,B,C,D	200
8.	Desilting of Qutab Nizam Minor of Khour Branch of D-11 of MRC from RD 0 to 3300 Mtr	2.00	-do-	15	A,B,C,D	200
9.	Silt clearance of Khour Branch of D-11 of MRC from RD 4510 to 8300 Mtr	4.44	-do-	25	A,B,C,D	200
10.	Silt clearance of D-13 of MRCC from RD 10 to 5350 Mtr at spots	3.93	-do-	20	A,B,C,D	200
11.	Silt clearance of D-14 of MRC from RD 300 to 8000 Mtr at spots	7.03	-do-	35	A,B,C,D	500
12.	Silt clearance of D-14 of MRC from RD 8020 to 13500 Mtr at spots	2.89	-do-	15	A,B,C,D	200
13.	Desilting of D-15 of MRC from RD 50 to 3735 Mtr	3.02	-do-	20	A,B,C,D	200
14.	Desilting of D-15 of MRC from RD 3735 to 7800 Mtr	2.92	-do-	15	A,B,C,D	200

Position of A.A.A: Accorded
Position of T.S: Under Process
Position of Funds: Budgetary Provision under MH-2700/2701/2702 (023-M&R)

Important Dates:
i) **Date of Publishing from:** 12-12-2024 (18:00 PM)
ii) **Downloading from :** 12-12-2024 (18:00 PM)
iii) **Uploading from:** 12-12-2024 (18:00 PM)
iv) **Uploading stops on :** 19-12-2024 (06:00 PM)
v) **Tender opens on:** 20-12-2024 (12:00 Noon - Subjective)

- The bidding documents can be downloaded from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in>.f. 12-12-2024 from 18:00 PM onwards.
- The bids shall be uploaded/ submitted in electronic format on the website <http://jktendersgov.in>.f.12-12-2024 from 18:00 PM onwards.
- The complete bidding process will be ONLINE.

No: JID/II/2024-25/5396-5432
Dated: 12-12-2024

DIP/J-8150/24
Date: 14-12-24

Sd/-
(Er. Hafiz Ullah Reshi)
Executive Engineer
Irrigation Division No.II
Jammu

EDITORIAL

Widening gap: A matter of concern

Jammu and Kashmir continues to grapple with a significant governance challenge: the widening gap between elected representatives and the bureaucracy. The latest episode, involving the boycott of a developmental meeting by Members of the District Development Council (DDC) Jammu and MLAs as per the certain media reports, underscores a troubling trend of non-cooperation by senior administrative officials. This incident not only highlights the persistent friction between these two pillars of governance but also raises serious concerns about the functioning of democratic institutions in a region still striving for political stability. On December 14, 2024, a meeting was scheduled at the PWD Guest House, Gandhi Nagar, to review progress under the Jal Jeevan Mission and Jal Shakti Department. The meeting, chaired by DDC Chairman Bharat Bhushan, was expected to facilitate discussions between elected representatives and senior officers, including the District Development Commissioner (DDC) Jammu, the Mission Director of Jal Jeevan Mission (J&K), and the Chief Engineer of Jal Shakti Department. However, the absence of these senior officials, leaving only subordinate staff to represent their departments, prompted a unanimous decision by the DDC members and MLAs to boycott the meeting.

In his written complaint to Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, DDC Chairman Bharat Bhushan termed the absence of senior officers as a blatant disregard for democratic processes and a serious hindrance to developmental priorities. This incident is emblematic of a larger issue plaguing governance in Jammu and Kashmir. The absence of senior officers from critical meetings reflects a worrying lack of accountability within the administrative machinery. Such behavior not only undermines the authority of elected representatives but also dilutes the effectiveness of governance by stalling discussions on key developmental projects. Democratically elected representatives serve as the voice of the people, channeling their concerns and aspirations into actionable plans. When bureaucrats fail to engage meaningfully with these representatives, it creates a vacuum in governance, leaving citizens' issues unaddressed. This is particularly detrimental in a region like Jammu and Kashmir, where the absence of a fully functional elected government has already strained the relationship between the administration and the public. The bureaucracy is often referred to as the backbone of governance. It is tasked with implementing policies and ensuring administrative continuity. However, its effectiveness is contingent upon a cooperative and respectful relationship with elected representatives. In Jammu and Kashmir, where governance structures are in a transitional phase, the bureaucracy's role becomes even more critical. Non-cooperation by senior officials not only erodes trust but also disrupts the delicate balance necessary for effective governance. To address this growing chasm, immediate measures are required including accountability Mechanisms where Lt Governor Manoj Sinha must take stringent action against the officers who failed to attend the meeting, institutional reforms and empowering elected representatives and strengthening democratic institutions. The non-cooperation displayed by senior bureaucrats in Jammu is not just an isolated incident but a symptom of a deeper governance malaise. Bridging the gap between elected representatives and the bureaucracy is imperative to ensure that developmental priorities are met and democratic processes are upheld. Lt Governor Manoj Sinha's intervention in this matter will be a litmus test for his administration's commitment to good governance. Ultimately, the people of Jammu and Kashmir deserve an administration that prioritizes their welfare over bureaucratic inertia.

HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

It is increasingly clear that fundamentalist Islamist organisations, which are pathologically hostile to India as well as to all secular and democratic persons and organisations in Bangladesh, are increasingly calling the shots in that country under the rule of its interim government. An indication of this is the relentless persecution of Shahriar Kabir, an internationally acclaimed author, journalist, champion of human rights, democracy and secularism, and a tireless campaigner to bring to justice the perpetrators of war crimes during Bangladesh's liberation war in 1971. He continues to languish in Kashimpur jail under terrible conditions. Despite being designated as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International, a magistrate's order giving him Division One status, which would give him a separate room and other facilities remains to be carried out. This is because the deputy commissioner of Ghazipur district, where Kashimpur prison, where he is lodged, is located, has not signed the order, which will be effective only after his signature is affixed to it. Nor, according to reports, does he seem inclined to sign it soon.

As a result, Kabir, who is 74-years-old has to live among common prisoners and sleep on the floor during a cold winter as his health continues to deteriorate. Earlier, during a remand hearing at Dhaka's Chief Metropolitan Magis-

trate's Court on 20 October, Kabir had complained that he was not receiving adequate medical treatment in jail. On November 2, he was taken to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital for a check-up. According to its deputy-director, he suffered from various old age-related ailments but these were not critical.

Kabir has high blood pressure and diabetes and a large accumulation of stones in his kidney. Blood is coming out with his stool. Given the role of the deputy commissioner, who presumably has nothing personal against him, it is difficult not to feel that the it is the interim government, led by Nobel laureate Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus, that wants to deny him Division One status. That it continues to do so despite considerable international demand for his release is clearly the result of pressure from organisations like the Hefazat-e-Islam (Hefazat) and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat).

Hefazat's hand in Kabir's persecution is clear from the fact that one of the several charges on which he has been jailed was filed with Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal on August 20, 2024, by Mufti Harun Izhar Chowdhury, Hefazat's joint secretary. It showed him, along with Sheikh Hasina, as one of the 23 accused, charged with crimes against humanity and mass killing in connection with the violent clashes between Hefazat's supporters and members of



security forces and Awami League activists during its rally in Dhaka, on May 5, 2013, to press its 13-point charter of demands. The latter included demand for a stricter dress code as ordained by Islam, a ban on statues, candlelight vigils and public mixing of men and women, besides the scrapping of the Awami League government's women's development policy. Also, it demanded the designation of Ahmadiyas as "non-Muslims."

The charter underlined the fundamentalist ideology of Hefazat which was formed in 2010 to oppose the Awami League government's women's development policy promising women equal rights to property. Comprising mainly of Sunni clerics heading a network of 19,199 Quami madrasahs and its students in Bangladesh, it has considerable power to mobilise in the streets. Its intensely anti-India orientation was reflected in its violent protests against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence on March 26, 2021.

Thirteen persons were killed and scores injured in clashes between its supporters and members of the security forces and Awami League's supporters.

While the Hefazat is not calling all the shots in the interim government, it certainly has a wide measure of influence and has its way wherever it wants, however small or big the event or the demand is. The "Mahati Sadhusanga and Lalon Mela" (great gathering of sadhus and Lalon fair) hosted by Muktidham Ashram and Lalon Academy in Madya Narsingpur, Kashipur Union Parishad in Narayanganj, was scheduled to begin on November 22, 2024. There was to be singing, dancing, festivities and food. Baul singers and devotee from all over Bangladesh were coming over for the occasion. The district administration, however, ordered its cancellation. A report in The Daily Star (November 23, 2024) quoted Fakir Shah Jalal, founder of the ashram and academy, said, "All arrangements had been made, but the administration did not permit the event, citing warning

from some members of the "Muslim" community. Even when we requested to hold the event indoors, without loudspeakers, it was denied."

A spiritual leader, philosopher, mystic poet and social reformer, Lalon articulated a weltanschauung, which encompassed the essence of the Bhakti cult and Sufism, rejected all distinctions of caste, class and creed, opposed theological conflicts and racism. It is not surprising that such a person would be anathema to fundamentalist Islamists. The report in The Daily Star, cited above, had stated that Hefazat-e-Islam leader Maulana Abdul Auwal had warned the administration in a speech to stop the event or face intervention by protestors.

Other Islamist organisations are also flexing their muscles. Speaking at a grand convention of the District Quami Madrasa Council in Dhaka on November 25, Mamunul Haque, the secretary general of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, described the August 5 revolution as a significant step toward an Islamic revolution in Bangladesh, adding that the country was destined to undergo an Islamist transformation.

Not surprisingly, Ahmadiyas and Sufis have come under attack. Several of the former's mosques were attacked on August 6. A violent mob destroyed Baba Pagla Ali's Sufi shrine at Sherpur district on August 29; another such mob vandalised and looted Ismail Pagla's

shrine in Sirajganj district on September 3.

Meanwhile two Islamist terrorist outfits—Ansar al-Islam (erstwhile Ansarullah Bangla Team) and Hijb-ut Tahrir (Tahrir) are increasingly active. Despite the ban on Tahrir, its supporters organised, on August 9, a rally in Dhaka city and demanded the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate in Bangladesh. Also, the statues of two police officers who died fighting the terrorists at the Holey Artisan Bakery in July 2016, have been destroyed and a Hijb-ut Tahrir poster has been found at the site. Despite the arrest of its media coordinator in Dhaka in early October, its activities continue, albeit clandestinely, in many parts of Bangladesh.

This is because the interim government is pursuing a much softer line against both Ansar al-Islam and Tahrir than Sheikh Hasina's government. An example is the release of the 'chief' of Ansar al-Islam on bail on August 26. As a consequence, while the Hefazat and Jamaat are riding high and terrorist bodies are quietly active, champions of secularism like Shahriar Kabir are imprisoned and organisations opposing communalism are apprehensive and defensive. In a situation like this, one can hardly rule out Bangladesh slowly sliding towards becoming a fundamentalist Islamist country and even an exporter of terrorism.

(The views expressed are personal)

Harmonising with change

RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJJI

Whether we like it or not, we have to constantly adapt to the changing time, changing thoughts, and changing future. Today, change has become so rapid that some people, especially professionals, have to keep a constant watch on the emerging trends and must be perpetually prepared to gear up in order to keep pace with change. As a consequence of keeping themselves in high gear constantly over a long period of time, many feel that rapid changes shake up their nerves and are physically and mentally so exhausting and taxing that life has become more of a problem than a plea-

sure. However, we must not have the impression that every change is an anathema.

No! On the contrary to common belief, change is generally a welcome feature of life, and stagnancy is always considered boring. It is the rapidity and high frequency of change, or the enormity of change, that forces responsible people to miss the necessary physical and mental rest, keeping them always on the move and causing them worry. But the question that arises is, what has led to this condition of rapid and ever-growing change? Observation and analysis tell us that it is science and technology that are responsible for this predicament, as they compel individu-

als to lead an increasingly faster life in a highly competitive world.

They force people to move like machines, which, too, are moving faster day by day and are changing enormously in design and functions. But if we go deeper into the problem, then we would find that science and technology are, in fact, at the service of mankind; therefore, it is man who decides what kind of gadgets and goods he requires and at what pace—not vice versa. The evolution of science is based on man's needs, desires, mindset, motives, emotions, set of values, conscience, and external influences, including exposure to media and to society's approval, appreciation, or criticism of his

acts. Hence, these factors are the major driving forces that lead to new inventions or new forms and designs. It is these factors that determine the purpose and use to which science and technology should be put. It is these which set new trends. It is these that lead to the rejection of the old and the change to the new.

Therefore, the rapidity of change depends, to a great degree, on the rapidity of rejection of the old system, old set of values, prevalent fashions and customs, and existing norms and beliefs. This, in turn, depends on how rapidly a person is dissatisfied or discontented with the present goods, facilities, services, practices, norms, status-symbols, and secu-

rity needs. This dissatisfaction or discontentment may, in some cases, be justified and may, in most cases, be due to a lack of man's inner stability and inner happiness stemming from a wrong set of values and wrong attitudes. A thorough analysis of the present situation would lead us to the conclusion that the current situation, which is leading us either to tension or depression or short-lived pleasure, is due to our own consumerist attitude, which is geared mainly to cater to man's indulgence in sensual pleasure or comforts.

In order to bring a change to this callous attitude and wrong lifestyle, we need to reform our mind by adopting a spiritual attitude through a spiri-

tual set of values, or what is called 'Spiritualism,' which is a turnaround of thoughts and a way of living. Today, those people who are trying to cope with change without bringing change to their mindset, value system, and lifestyle through spirituality have really missed the message of the wise. Therefore, it's high time that we as a society realised that simplicity of lifestyle, by embracing spiritual values, alone would be the remedy to the present precarious situation that would empower us to manage rapid change with vigor and enthusiasm.

(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)

The rise of preventative fillers: A new era in beauty standards

HEMA PANT

In recent years, a noticeable trend has emerged among India's Millennials and Gen Z, the increasing popularity of early cosmetic treatments like fillers. This shift highlights evolving beauty standards influenced heavily by social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, where idealised images of flawless skin abound.

These platforms perpetuate an image-driven culture, encouraging young people to consider cosmetic enhancements as a means to maintain a youthful appearance and meet contemporary beauty ideals. Recent data from Deloitte underscores this trend, revealing that 65 per cent of Millennials and 58 per cent of Gen Z in India have a positive outlook on using technology and aesthetic treatments to improve their lives.

This optimism is coupled with a heightened focus on self-care and personal enhancement, which has led to the rising popularity of preventative fillers. Often referred to as 'Baby Botox,' these treatments involve minimal amounts of Botox or dermal fillers used before the onset of wrinkles, appealing to those who wish to stave off the visible signs of ageing before they even begin. A significant demographic shift is evident in data from NASSCOM, which indicates that Millennials and Gen Z comprise 52 per cent of India's population.

This figure highlights the growing influence of these younger generations who are increasingly well-versed in cosmetic procedures and less stigmatised by them. The normalisation of such treatments owes much to open discussions on social media, where people share their



experiences and results, contributing to a growing acceptance. The American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery reports that 64 per cent of practitioners have noted a rise in patients under 30 seeking cosmetic procedures, reflecting this broader cultural acceptance. The allure of preventative fillers lies not only in the desire to maintain a youthful appearance but also in the empowerment that comes from taking control of one's aesthetic journey.

Young individuals today are more informed and proactive about their beauty routines, often seeking expert advice to make informed decisions. This proactive approach to beauty and self-care represents a significant cultural shift toward embracing enhancements as a normal part of life in a digital era. However, while the appeal of preventative fillers is undeniable, young people must approach these treatments with caution. Overuse can result in "filler fatigue," a condition where

excessive treatments lead to skin stretching and the need for more frequent interventions.

A balanced approach that integrates overall skin health with aesthetic goals is essential to ensure that beauty enhancements do not compromise one's natural appearance.

Education plays a vital role in this process. Young individuals are encouraged to seek guidance from reputable professionals who prioritise safety and use high-quality products. By doing so, they can make informed choices that align with their personal beauty goals without succumbing to the pressures of fleeting trends. This emphasis on education and safety empowers them to navigate their beauty journeys with confidence, fostering a sense of self-assuredness in their natural selves.

The rise of early cosmetic treatments among India's youth illustrates a

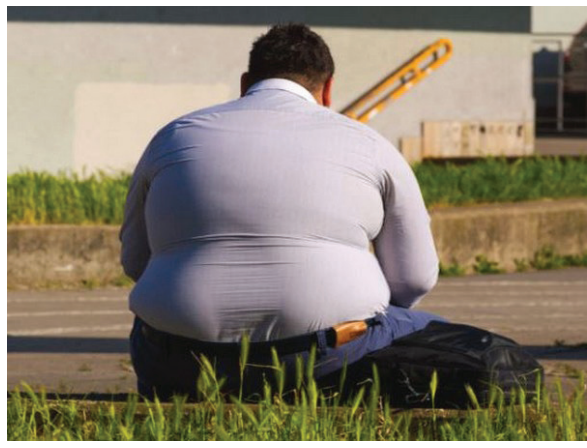
significant cultural shift towards embracing self-care and beauty enhancements in a digital era. As these generations navigate their identities in a visually oriented world, they increasingly turn to options like fillers to maintain their youthful allure. By prioritising education and safety, young individuals are empowered to make informed decisions about their beauty routines, fostering confidence in their natural selves.

As this trend continues to evolve, it will be intriguing to observe how it shapes the ongoing conversation around beauty in modern society. The future of beauty is likely to be shaped by these young, informed consumers who value both innovation and authenticity, setting new standards for generations to come.

(The writer is Medical Director, Sculpt Clinics; views are personal)

Study reveals obesity is critical risk factor for type 2 diabetes, regardless of genetics

There is a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes by at least 6 times in people suffering from obesity, regardless of genetic predisposition to the disease, suggests a recent study. The research was published in *Diabetologia* (the journal of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes [EASD]). The study is by Dr Theresia Schnurr and Hermina Jakupovi, Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Basic Metabolic Research, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, and colleagues. Using data from a case-cohort study nested within the Diet, Cancer and Health cohort in Denmark, the authors examined the joint association of obesity, genetic predisposition, and unfavourable lifestyle with incident type 2 diabetes (T2D).



The study sample included 4,729 individuals who developed type 2 diabetes during a median of 14.7 years of follow-up and a randomly selected cohort sample of 5,402 individuals (the control group). The mean age of all participants was 56.1 years (range 50-65) and 49.6% were women. Overall, 21.8% of all participants were classified as obese, 43.0% as overweight and

35.2% as having normal weight; and 40.0% of the participants had a favourable lifestyle, 34.6% had an intermediate lifestyle and 25.4% had an unfavourable lifestyle.

Genetic predisposition was quantified using a genetic risk score (GRS) comprising 193 known type 2 diabetes-associated genetic variants and divided into 5 risk groups of 20% each (quintiles),

from lowest (quintile 1) to highest (quintile 5) genetic risk. Lifestyle was assessed by a lifestyle score composed of smoking, alcohol consumption, physical activity and diet. Statistical modelling was used to calculate the individual and combined associations of the GRS, obesity and lifestyle score with developing T2D.

Compared with people of normal weight, those with obesity were almost six times more likely to develop T2D, while people who were overweight had a 2.4 times increased risk. For genetic risk, those with the highest GRS were twice as likely to develop T2D as those with the lowest, while those with the unhealthiest lifestyle were 18% more likely to develop T2D than those with the healthiest.

Individuals who ranked high for all three risk fac-

tors, with obesity, high GRS & unfavourable lifestyle, had 14.5 times increased risk of developing T2D, compared with individuals who had a normal body weight, low GRS and favourable lifestyle. Notably, even among individuals with a low GRS and favourable lifestyle, obesity was associated with 8.4 times increased risk of T2D compared with normal-weight individuals in the same genetic and lifestyle risk group. The authors conclude: "The results suggest that type 2 diabetes prevention by weight management and healthy lifestyle is critical across all genetic risk groups."

Furthermore, we found that the effect of obesity on type 2 diabetes risk is dominant over other risk factors, highlighting the importance of weight management in type 2 diabetes prevention."

Study reveals milk allergy guidelines may cause over diagnosis in babies, children

Researchers have discovered that the current medical guidelines for diagnosing cow's milk allergy in babies and young children may be linked to overdiagnosis of the condition. This is the finding of a new analysis from Imperial College London and Sechenov University in Moscow. In the paper, a review published in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics*, the team found that around 1 per cent of children have cow's milk allergy, but up to 14 per cent of families believe their child to have the condition. The team point to official guidelines for detecting cow's milk allergy as a possible cause for the overdiagnosis. The researchers analysed nine official guidelines who had declared a conflict of interest with formula manufacturers and found eight out of ten of all guideline authors reported a conflict of interest.



These guidelines were from a range of medical organisations in a number of countries, predominantly in Europe. The team found that many of the guidelines named symptoms such as excessive crying, regurgitating milk and loose stools as indications of cow's milk allergy - but the authors argue that these symptoms are very common in normal, healthy babies. The team found that in a recent European birth cohort study following over 12,000 infants in nine countries, less than 1 per cent of infants had cow's milk allergy. However, they also found that in some studies up to 14 per cent of families believe their infant has a cow's milk allergy.

In addition to this, the analysis suggests the prescription of specialist formulas for babies with cow's milk allergy had increased significantly between 2000 and 2018 in countries such as Australia and England, without any evidence for an increase in cow's milk allergy. The team analysed the number of authors of the guidelines who had declared a conflict of interest with formula manufacturers and found eight out of ten of all guideline authors reported a conflict of interest.

The team also found seven of the nine guidelines advised breastfeeding women to cut out all dairy from their diet if their child has a suspected cow's milk allergy. However, their analysis of 13 studies of breastmilk composition suggests less than one-millionth of the protein from cow's milk travels through to breast milk, and this would be too small to trigger a reaction in most allergic children.

Dr Robert Boyle, Consultant Allergy Specialist and lead author of the research from Imperial's National Heart and Lung Institute, explained: "Many infants who are labelled as having milk allergy don't have the con-

dition. Having a child with a suspected milk allergy can be a stressful time for any family. Misdiagnosing milk allergy could lead to another condition with similar symptoms being missed, or breast-feeding mothers needlessly following restricted diets - or even stopping breastfeeding altogether. It can also lead to families and the NHS unnecessarily paying for expensive specialist formula."

Dr Daniel Munblit, Associate Professor of Paediatrics from Sechenov University and first author of the paper, explained: "In the nine guidelines we studied, seven of them suggested including milder symptoms as an indication of non-IgE cow's milk allergy, such as regurgitating milk, crying and rashes - but many of these symptoms are present normally in babies, and will get better with time. Non-IgE cow's milk allergy affects less than 1 per cent of infants whereas troublesome vomiting, crying or eczema each affect 15-20 per cent of babies."

The team analysed data on the amount of a type of cow's milk protein known to trigger allergic reactions, called beta-lactoglobulin.

Playing video games benefit in cognitive development, study suggests

Playing video games has multiple benefits! Research has shown that experience of playing video games can improve cognitive development such as greater sensitivity to contrasts, better eye-to-hand coordination and superior memory.



Action real-time strategy video games such as *Age of Empires*, *World of Warcraft*, and *Total War* are played by millions. These games, which can be won through strategic planning, selective attention, sensorimotor skills, and teamwork place considerable demands on the brain. The study finds that expert players of real-time strategy games have faster information processing, allocate more cognitive power to individual visual stimuli, and allocate limited cognitive resources between successive stimuli more effectively through time.

These findings in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* suggest that playing such games can cause long-term changes in the brain and lead to an improvement in temporal visual selective attention.

"Our aim was to evaluate the long-term effect of experience with action real-time strategy games on temporal visual selective attention," said author Dr Diankun Gong, Associate Professor in the Ministry of Education Key Laboratory for Neuroinformation at the University of Electronic Science and Technology

of China. "In particular, we wanted to reveal the time course of cognitive processes during the attentional blink task, a typical task used by neuroscientists to study visual selective attention," Gong added. To study the effect of gaming on temporal visual selective attention, Gong and colleagues selected 38 volunteers, healthy young male students from the University of Electronic Science and Technology. Half of the volunteers were expert players of the typical action real-time strategy game *League of Legend*. The others were beginners, with less than six months' experience of the same game. All volunteers were seated in front of a screen and tested in a blink task (the tendency of focused observers to "blink" - that is, to fail to properly register - a visual stimulus if it appears so quickly after a previous stimulus that cognitive processing of the first hasn't finished). The greater a volunteer's tendency to "blink" targets,

the less frequently he would press the correct button when one of the two targets appeared on the screen, and the worse he did overall in the task.

"We found that expert League of Legend players outperformed beginners in the task. The experts were less prone to the blink effect, detecting targets more accurately and faster, and as shown by their stronger P3b, gave more attentional cognitive resources to each target," said co-author Dr Weiyi Ma, Assistant Professor in Human Development & Family Sciences at the University of Arkansas, USA. "Our results suggest that long-term experience of action real-time strategy games leads to improvements in temporal visual selective attention: the expert gamers had become more effective in distributing limited cognitive resources between successive visual targets," said author Dr Tiejun Liu. "We conclude that such games can be a powerful tool for cognitive training," Liu added.

Alzheimer's may alter drug absorption, affecting dosages

Patients with Alzheimer's disease (AD) are often prescribed drugs for other conditions including diabetes or high blood pressure at the same doses as those without dementia. That practice might need to be re-examined in the wake of findings of a recent study. The findings suggest that AD could alter the absorption of medications from the digestive tract, so dosages might need to be adjusted for these patients. The new study was reported in the journal *Molecular Pharmaceutics*.

Because AD is primarily considered a disease of the nervous system, scientists have mostly focused on its impact on drug uptake across the blood-brain barrier (BBB). Their research revealed that the quantity and function of proteins that transport drugs through the BBB are altered in people with AD.

Less attention has been given to other biological barriers, such as the intestine's lining, through which oral drugs pass into the bloodstream. The few small studies published on this subject, however, suggest that this absorption process may be disrupted in AD. Joseph A. Nicolazzo and colleagues wanted to know if these changes could occur with drugs commonly prescribed to AD patients.

Using mice that serve as a model for AD, the team measured the absorption of compounds that move from the small intestine to the bloodstream through three different mechanisms.

For example, blood plasma levels of diazepam, which diffuses passively through intestinal cells to reach the bloodstream, were similar in AD mice compared with control mice. But AD mice had less valsartan and digoxin in their plasma than controls.

Passage of these drugs through intestinal cells is controlled by transporters that could be disrupted by AD, according to the team's prior research.

These drugs may also pass through gaps between intestinal cells, and tissue samples indicated that these gaps might be more restrictive in AD mice.

If these findings translate to people with AD, the researchers recommend revisiting dosing regimens for certain drugs to ensure their plasma concentrations remain in the appropriate range.

Study reveals rare, damaging inherited mutations work together to reduce lifespan

The combined effects of rare and damaging mutations present at birth have a negative impact on healthspan and longevity, suggests a novel study. The findings suggest that one additional inherited damaging mutation could carve off six months of life, and the combinations of these rare mutations determine how soon someone will develop diseases such as cancer, heart disease and dementia. The study was published in the journal *eLife*. Most of the genetic variants linked to a lifespan that researchers

currently know about have been found in people who live long, such as centenarians who live to 100 or older. The variants responsible for rest of the population's survival remain poorly understood.

Now, researchers have proposed that the remaining variance that contributes to lifespan could be attributed to the combination of very rare, but highly damaging mutations, which are present in every person's genome.

"The role of ultra-rare damaging mutations that decrease lifespan

and healthspan has been largely overlooked," said co-senior author Vadim Gladyshev, Professor at Brigham & Women's Hospital & Harvard Medical School, Boston, US.

"They are different in different people, but in combination, they exhibit an unexpectedly large effect on lifespan," Gladyshev added. "Until recently, only common gene variants could be probed in genetic studies due to a small number of participants," explained co-first author Anastasia Shindyapina, a postdoctoral

researcher at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School.

"However, large datasets that sequenced tens of thousands of people now allow us to assess the effects of DNA variation that appear in less than one out of 10,000 subjects," Shindyapina said. Ultra-rare protein-truncating variants (PTVs) are known to be some of the most damaging genetic variants. These tend to have a larger impact than more common genetic variants and can dramatically change the amount

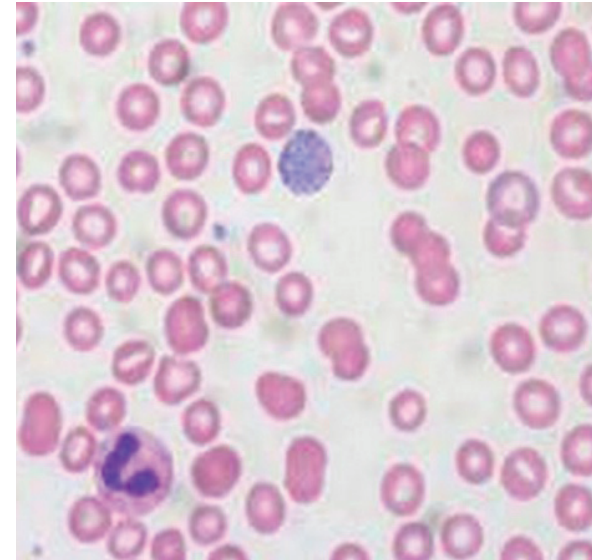
and function of important proteins in the body. Increased frequency of PTVs has been linked to complex diseases such as schizophrenia, epilepsy and autism. In this study, Shindyapina, along with co-first author Aleksandr Zenin, a researcher at Gero, Singapore and their colleagues set out to learn how the number of PTVs a person is born with influences their lifespan. They also wanted to see whether accumulating additional PTVs throughout life can affect overall health and length of survival.

Study reveals deadliest malaria strain protects itself from immune system

In a novel study, researchers have found that the parasite causing the most severe form of malaria uses proteins to make red blood cells sticky, making it harder for the immune system to destroy it and leading to potentially fatal blood clots. The study identified how parasite may control this process.

The Nature Microbiology study looked into how the parasite, *Plasmodium falciparum*, evades the immune system. This parasite causes more than 95% of the 400,000 deaths caused by malaria each year. Once it enters the human bloodstream, the parasite releases proteins into the host's red blood cell which are then presented on the outside surface of the cell. These proteins stick to other blood cells and blood vessel walls so that the infected cells no longer circulate around the body and pass through the spleen. This protects the parasite as the spleen and the immune cells inside it would destroy these infected cells. This stickiness can also lead to blood cells lumping together into blood clots. By blocking the blood flow to vital organs, these clots can have fatal consequences, especially if they form in the brain or placenta.

Heledd Davies, co-lead author and postdoc in the Signalling in Apicomplexan Parasites Laboratory at the Crick, says: "This



malaria parasite species is able to use a number of different variants of the same protein to make red blood cells sticky. So, if the body develops antibodies that stop one variant working, the parasite can simply switch to another one, leading to a constant arms race."

A potentially more effective route for therapies could be to target the mechanism malaria uses to transport the proteins to the cell's surface, as blocking it would reduce symptoms and allow the body to clear the parasites."

In this study, the authors identified proteins, so-called kinases, which are involved in getting the sticky proteins to the cell surface. Kinases are enzymes that can turn many other proteins on or off, and often regulate important processes in cells.

"These kinases are not released by other strains of malaria that infect humans, so we predicted that they are some of the factors that make this species deadlier," says Hugo Belda, co-lead author and PhD student in the Signalling in Apicomplexan Parasites Laboratory at the Crick.

"In our research, we tested what happened when we removed different protein kinases from the parasite, while it is living in human blood.

One protein played an important role in controlling cell stickiness, while others may be required for yet unknown aspects of the parasite's biology. This is very exciting and will help to better understand the disease mechanism," explains Moritz Treeck, group leader in the Signalling in Apicomplexan Parasites Laboratory at the Crick.

Pranab should've been made PM, Manmohan elevated to President in 2012: Aiyar in New Book

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 15

Pranab Mukherjee should have been given the reins of the UPA-II Government and Manmohan Singh elevated to President when the office of Rashtrapati presented an opening in 2012, veteran Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar says in his latest book.

The 83-year-old Aiyar states in the book that if this step had been taken, the UPA would not have gone into a "paralysis of governance".

He says the decision to retain Manmohan Singh as the PM and shift Pranab Mukherjee to the Rashtrapati Bhawan "doomed" any prospects the Congress might have had to form UPA-III.

Aiyar puts forward these ideas in his forthcoming book 'A Maverick in Politics' published by Juggernaut.

In the book, Aiyar talks about his early days in politics, navigating through the Narasimha Rao years, his time as a minister in UPA I, his Rajya Sabha term and then his "decline...fade out...fall".

"In 2012, the prime minister (Manmohan Singh) underwent operations for multiple coronary bypasses. He never quite recovered physically. It slowed him down and this

showed up in governance. As for the party, there was no official announcement about the Congress president's health when she took ill at about the same time as the PM," Aiyar says.

It soon became clear that in both the offices – the PM's and the party president's – there was stasis, a distinct absence of governance, while several crises, particularly Anna Hazare's 'India Against Corruption' movement, were either not handled effectively or not handled at all, says the diplomat-turned-politician.

"The choice of Rashtrapati: Manmohan Singh or Pranab Mukherjee. Personally, I was of the view that Pranab Mukherjee should have been given the reins of the government and Dr Manmohan Singh elevated to President of India when the office of Rashtrapati presented an opening in 2012," he says.

"This was principally because we needed a very active PM in good health and with the energy to lead the government (Pranab Da) and a person of high distinction who had served his country exceptionally well (Dr Singh) to preside over the nation. Pranab's memoirs indicate that this was in fact contemplated," Aiyar points out.



He quotes Mukherjee as saying in his memoir that while Sonia Gandhi was 'on holiday in the Kausambi hills', she had given the 'vague impression' that she was considering making Singh the 'presidential nominee'.

"This led Pranab to wonder 'if she selected Singh for the presidential office, she may choose me as the prime minister'. For reasons to which neither I, nor it seems anyone else, was made privy, the decision was taken to retain Dr Manmohan Singh as PM and shift Pranab Mukherjee upstairs as Rashtrapati," says Aiyar.

That, in my view, doomed any prospects the Congress might have had to form UPA-III, he adds.

While the Indian media slammed the government, Time magazine ran a very damaging cover story that described Dr Singh as a 'Do Nothing' Prime Minister, he recalls in the book.

Aiyar argues that Pranab's left-wing reputation would have disturbed the business community and the Americans if he were made PM, but there was no one more experienced than him.

"I hazard the view that if this obvious step had been taken, we would not have gone into a paralysis of governance and thus opened the door to the worst excesses of Hindutva in the general elections of 2014," he says.

In the book, Aiyar also recounts his own most telling memory of the "meltdown of UPA II" was when he returned home one evening he found his wife, Suneet, sitting before the TV set with a shattered look on her face.

"When I inquired what the matter was, she raised her stricken face and exclaimed, 'No scams today!' We, therefore, went into the 2014 general elections very much

a runner up. In the event, the election exposed the Indian National Congress as a broken reed that fell from 404 seats in 1984 to 44 seats in 2014," Aiyar says.

Talking to PTI about his view expressed in the book that Mukherjee should have been made PM in 2012, Aiyar said, "Manmohan Singh had six bypasses. So, we were crippled at the head of the government and at the head of the party. But there was one man who was still full of energy, full of ideas, had a certain amount of charisma and could have run either the party or the government or even both. And that was Pranab Mukherjee."

"...And if that had happened, if Dr. Manmohan Singh had become President and Pranab had become the Prime Minister, I still think we would have lost in 2014. But not by this massive humiliating defeat that we actually had, where we fell to 44 seats. I mean, a party that had been at 414 in 1984, December, had fallen in 2014 to 44 seats. And that is because there was no governance," he told PTI.

In 2013, everyone was recovering from illness and so a lot of charges were made against us, which had never been established in a court of

law, he said.

In his book, Aiyar says the government and the party were unable to carry credibility in answering the charges to an obviously sensational-hungry media and thought the issues could be quashed by getting the ministers concerned to resign.

That resolved nothing, and only aggravated the harm the unproven allegations caused to the government's reputation, he says.

The Commonwealth Games scandal also contributed to blackening the government's face in the eyes of the general public, Aiyar adds.

"But what, perhaps, put the lid on the UPA government's election prospects was the mishandled Anna Hazare-led agitation, 'India Against Corruption'."

"The minister of home affairs, PC who initially refused Anna Hazare permission to conduct his fast in the Ram Lila grounds, eventually caved in and the Ram Lila grounds became 'ground zero' for a much-publicized agitation. I think the lowest point in UPA-II's reign was when three Union ministers went to Delhi airport to receive the private aircraft of Baba Ramdev, the highly controversial 'godman' who was supporting Anna Hazare," Aiyar says in the book.

Sambhal administration continues crackdown on encroachments, power theft near Shahi Jama Masjid



AGENCIES
SAMBHAL (UP), DEC 15

Weeks after violent clashes over a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid claimed four lives, the district administration has launched a campaign against encroachments and illegal power theft in the area around the historic mosque.

As part of its efforts, the administration began removing encroachments from the area on Sunday morning.

According to Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Shrish Chandra, the focus is on clearing drains outside houses and shops in the area under the Nakhasa police station.

The area is close to the residence of Samajwadi Party (SP) MP Zia ur Rehman Barq.

Chandra said the operation, aimed at restoring public spaces and ensuring a smooth flow of the drainage system, started at 7 am.

The drive uncovered an illegal stockpile of domestic gas cylinders in a house. Supply Inspector Yogesh Shukla said they

found 25 such cylinders at the house of Haji Rabban.

"While the family claimed that the cylinders were for a wedding, they were unable to provide the necessary documentation. The cylinders, two of which were filled and the rest empty, were confiscated and an FIR was registered," Shukla said.

Meanwhile, the electricity department also carried out a major operation targeting power theft.

Naveen Gautam, Executive Engineer of the department, said during a raid at Deepa Sarai, officials unearthed illegal electricity connections in four mosques and a madrasa.

"A total of 130 kilowatts of electricity, amounting to approximately Rs 1.25 crore, were being stolen. The operation led to the identification of 49 individuals involved in the theft and FIRs are being filed against them," Gautam said.

In another development, the Bhasma Shankar temple, which was reopened by the district administration on Saturday, has resumed regular worship.

Arrangements are being made to accommodate 100 crore devotees at Maha Kumbh: Yogi

AGENCIES
LUCKNOW, DEC 15

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that while 40 crore devotees are expected to attend the 45-day Prayagraj Maha Kumbh (from January 13 to February 26), arrangements are being made to accommodate 100 crore devotees.

The CM said that on January 29, during the main Muhurta of Mauni Amavasya, an estimated six crore devotees will take a holy dip, but preparations are being made for 10 crore devotees.

He said, "The Maha Kumbh will feature extensive facilities, including 12 km of ghats and an expanded area spanning 10,000 acres. Devotees will have the opportunity to experience the darshan of Char Dham, Dwadash Jyotirlingas, and other significant Jyotirlingas. The event will integrate cutting-edge technology, such as an AI-based Bhashini app in 11 Indian languages, allowing visitors to access information about the Kumbh and services like Khoya-Paya in their preferred language."

Yogi said, "The government plans to implement a precise headcount of every attendee and ensure a sustainable, eco-friendly event. The Mahakumbh will feature



zero liquid discharge systems, 1.50 lakh toilets, and a ban on single-use plastics. This grand event aims to set a benchmark and drive Uttar Pradesh's roadmap for economic prosperity."

During his address, the Chief Minister also shared his views on the Sambhal issue. He highlighted the tragic events that took place 46 years ago in Sambhal, where innocent people lost their lives to barbaric violence.

Yogi questioned why the perpetrators of the massacre have not been brought to justice even after decades.

Referring to Sambhal's ancient temple, he emphasised its historic significance, including the ancient idol of Bajrang Bali and the Jyotirlinga.

"This temple did not reappear overnight. It represents our enduring heritage and the truth of our history," the CM said. The CM criticised those

who try to suppress the truth or tarnish cultural events like the Kumbh, emphasising that voices of truth often face threats and efforts to silence them.

Yogi highlighted the remarkable transformation of the 2019 Prayagraj Kumbh, stating that it redefined expectations. "Anyone who witnessed the Kumbh of 2019 would have seen the out-of-the-box efforts that made it clean, safe, and well-organised."

What was once associated with dirt, chaos, stampedes, and insecurity became a divine and grand event," he said.

The Chief Minister credited the success of the 2019 Kumbh to its high standards of cleanliness, management, and security, noting that it was so exemplary that Prime Minister Narendra Modi washed the feet of sanitation workers in appreciation. "It is part of

India's heritage to express gratitude to those who contribute to its success," he said.

Yogi said, "The upcoming Maha Kumbh 2025 will showcase a unique confluence of faith and modernity."

The CM indirectly criticised Congress and opposition parties for claiming exclusive ownership of India's legacy. "Some people wander around with a self-proclaimed contract of representing India and treat Discovery of India as if it were the oldest book of this country," he said.

Yogi referenced the historic Supreme Court verdict on Shri Ram Janmabhoomi delivered on November 9, 2019, which resolved a decades-long dispute. Yet, he pointed out, some individuals continue to threaten the judges who delivered the decision.

The CM accused opposition leaders of hypocrisy in the name of the Constitution, citing their no-confidence motion against the Vice President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. "The Chairman emphasised his duty to ensure the House functions and public issues are discussed. Yet, these people accused him of bias and moved a no-confidence motion to silence him," he said.

perature is expected to settle around 23 degrees Celsius.

Meanwhile, the national capital's Air Quality Index (AQI) remained in the 'poor' category with a reading of 257 at 9 am.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

Maywati urges parties to support ONOE bills; slams SP, Cong on reservation issue

AGENCIES
LUCKNOW, DEC 15

BSP chief Mayawati on Sunday attacked the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, saying they should not speak on reservations as they colluded in opposing legislation giving quota in promotions to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) when the Congress-led UPA was in power.

Addressing a press conference, she also backed the Centre's bills on 'one nation-one election', stressing it will reduce expenses and ensure public welfare works continue uninterrupted. She urged other parties to also support the measure.

Mayawati demanded that reservations for SC, ST and OBC be included in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution to prevent any tampering. Central and state laws listed in the Ninth Schedule are exempt from judicial review.

During the discussion on the Constitution in Lok Sabha, the ruling side and the opposition, especially the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, to woo Dalit and OBC voters, have said a lot of "baseless" things about reservation issue in which there is "not even an iota of truth", she told reporters.

"And it would have been better if these two parties (Congress, SP) had remained silent on this issue in Parliament, because during the time of the Congress party's government at the Centre and with the connivance of this party, SP had strongly opposed the Constitutional Amendment Bill related to reservations in promotion of SC and ST communities."

"This bill was torn and thrown away by SP in the Parliament itself and ... is still pending in the Parlia-



ment," she lamented.

The BSP chief also targeted the ruling BJP and said, "The anti-reservation mentality of the BJP is also clearly visible, due to which they are in no mood to get the bill passed."

Mayawati said that there was a heated discussion in the Parliament on the 'glorious journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India'.

"But its usefulness is possible only when it is accepted with an open mind whether the ruling class has been able to provide employment and justice, a life of self-respect and self-esteem to crores of people of the country as per the sacred intention of the humanitarian and welfare Constitution," she said.

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said that the Constitution has not failed but the people and parties ruling the country have failed the Constitution of the country with their "narrow thinking and casteist politics".

Mayawati also said that the "resolutions" being taken by the current BJP government are not going to benefit the people of the country.

She said if the government makes amendments to the Constitution to benefit a party or any particular person or institution, "then our party will strongly oppose it".

Mayawati said being the party of the poor and the oppressed, the BSP welcomes the related bills brought by the BJP government regarding 'one nation, one election'.

Atul Subhash Suicide Case: Police Arrest Wife Nikita Singhania, Two Others



AGENCIES
BENGALURU, DEC 15

Three people have been arrested in connection with the Atul Subhash death case who committed suicide by hanging alleging harassment by his wife, Karnataka police said, adding that Subhash's wife Nikita Singhania has been arrested from Haryana's Gurugram.

According to the police, the other two accused, identified as Nisha Singhania, mother of Nikita Singhania and her brother, Anurag Singhania, were arrested from Uttar Pradesh's Allahabad. All the three accused in this case were sent to judicial custody as per the order of the court, police said.

"Accused AI Nikita Singhania has been arrested from Gurugram, Haryana. Accused A2 Nisha Singhania and Accused A3 Anurag Singhania were arrested from Allahabad and were produced before the court and given to judicial custody," Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) White Field Division, Bengaluru, Shivakumar said in a release.

Atul Subhash, the 34-year-old deputy general manager of a private

firm, died by suicide on Monday in his Bengaluru apartment, leaving behind a 24-page suicide note, accusing his wife and her relatives of harassment. In his suicide note, he also alleged that a judge had demanded Rs 5 lakh to "settle" the case.

The father of Bengaluru techie Atul Subhash, said his son had been "broken from inside" after multiple cases were filed against him and his family by his wife.

"My son used to say that there is a lot of corruption but he will fight as he is on the path of truth... He was broken from inside, though he didn't tell anyone anything," Subhash's father Pawan Kumar said.

Atul Subhash died by suicide in the early hours of December 9 after alleging harassment from his wife and her family. Subhash wrote "Justice is due" on every page of a 24-page note.

He also alleged in his suicide note that his wife had filed nine cases against him under various sections, including murder, sexual misconduct, harassment for money, domestic violence, and dowry.

Delhi's minimum temperature 4.9 degrees C; air quality 'poor'

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 15

The minimum temperature in Delhi settled three notches below the season's average at 4.9 degrees Celsius on Sunday, the Met office said.

The city on Thursday recorded the lowest temperature of this winter season so far with the minimum temperature dipping to 4.5 degrees



Celsius. According to the India

Meteorological Department, the maximum tem-

Alleged Chinese spy got close to senior British royal, met former PMs

AGENCIES
LONDON, DEC 15

The scandal surrounding an alleged Chinese spy who managed to gain access to Buckingham Palace as a "close confidant" of Prince Andrew, the younger brother of King Charles III, intensified on Sunday as it emerged that he also met former prime ministers David Cameron and Theresa May.

While Cameron and May distanced themselves from any knowledge of his espionage links, the row involving the businessman, known only as "H6" for legal reasons, continues to dominate the headlines after a tribunal judge noted that he had an "unusual" degree of trust from the senior royal.

Earlier, Andrew, the Duke of York, said in a statement that he had "ceased all contact" with the alleged spy.

"David Cameron was leader of the Conservative Party for over a decade and PM for six years. He met thousands of people during that time at hundreds of functions and



events. We don't have any further information about this individual," a source close to Cameron, now Lord Cameron, was quoted as saying by 'Sky News'.

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for Theresa May said "as such, she doesn't remember when or where this particular photograph was taken or the man in question".

The revelations come after it emerged earlier this week that H6 had been barred from entering the UK due to national security risks. A Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) went on to hear in July that the man was invited to Prince Andrew's birthday party in 2020 and was told by

a royal aide that he could act on the Duke's behalf when dealing with potential investors in China.

According to SIAC case details, H6 was first excluded from entering the country in 2023 over national security fears by Suella Braverman, who was then home secretary. In July last year, the Home Office said H6 was considered to have engaged in "covert and deceptive activity" on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party. H6 denied the allegations and appealed that decision in the SIAC, which ruled against him on Thursday.

In a statement, Prince Andrew's office said the Duke had met the man "through official chan-

nels" and there was "nothing of a sensitive nature ever discussed".

The Chinese Embassy in the UK has denied the espionage allegations, saying "some individuals in the UK are always eager to fabricate baseless 'spy' stories targeting China".

"Their purpose is to smear China and disrupt normal exchanges between Chinese and British personnel," a spokesperson said.

However, former Tory Cabinet minister Gillian Keegan said on Sunday that the UK should "always be vigilant", and it is "surprising that people are surprised" by China's activities because security advice has been given to people visiting China going back 30 years.

"They are the biggest strategic threat we have. They're a much bigger strategic threat than Russia," she said.

UK Home Secretary Yvette Cooper laid out the Labour government's stance as ensuring that the country's security and intelligence agencies are "continually vigilant for any threat to UK national security".

South Korean leaders seek calm after Yoon is impeached

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC 15

South Korea's opposition leader offered Sunday to work with the government to ease the political tumult as officials sought to reassure allies and markets, a day after the opposition-controlled parliament voted to impeach conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol over a short-lived attempt to impose martial law.

Liberal Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung, whose party holds a majority in the National Assembly, urged the Constitutional Court to rule swiftly on Yoon's impeachment and proposed a special council for policy cooperation between the government and parliament.

Yoon's powers have been suspended until the court decides whether to remove him from office or reinstate him. If Yoon is dismissed, a national election to choose his successor must be held within 60 days.

Lee, who has led a fierce political offensive against Yoon's embattled government, is seen as the front-runner to replace him. He lost the 2022 presidential election to Yoon by a razor-thin margin.

He told a televised news conference that a swift court ruling would be the only way to "minimise national confusion and the suffering of people."

The court will meet to discuss the case Monday, and has up to 180 days to rule. But observers say that a court ruling could come faster. In the case of parliamentary impeachments of past presidents - Roh Moo-hyun in 2004 and Park Geun-hye in 2016 - the court spent 63 days and 91 days respectively before determining to reinstate Roh and dismiss Park.

Lee also proposed a national council where



the government and the National Assembly would work together to stabilise state affairs, and said his party won't seek to impeach Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, a Yoon appointee who's now serving as acting president.

"The Democratic Party will actively cooperate with all parties to stabilise state affairs and restore international trust," Lee said. "The National Assembly and government will work together to quickly resolve the crisis that has swept across the Republic of Korea."

It's unclear if Lee's proposed council will be realised.

In a meeting with the parliament speaker, who touched upon Lee's idea, Han said he will closely cooperate and communicate with the National Assembly but didn't specifically say whether the government intends to join the council. Kweon Seong-dong, floor leader of the ruling People Power Party, separately criticised Lee's proposal, saying that it's "not right" for the opposition party acting like the ruling party.

Kweon, a Yoon loyalist, said that his party will use existing PPP-government dialogue channels "to continue to assume responsibility as the governing party until the end of President Yoon's term."

The Democratic Party has already used its parliamentary majority to impeach the justice minister and the chief of the national police over the martial law decree, and

had previously said it was also considering impeaching the prime minister.

Upon assuming his role as acting leader, Han ordered the military to bolster its security posture to prevent North Korea from launching provocations. He also asked the foreign minister to inform other countries that South Korea's major external policies will remain unchanged, and the finance minister to work to minimise potential negative impacts on the economy from the political turmoil.

On Sunday, Han had a phone call with US President Joe Biden, discussing the political situation in South Korea and regional security challenges including North Korea's nuclear programme.

Biden expressed his appreciation for the resiliency of democracy in South Korea and reaffirmed "the ironclad commitment" of the United States, according to both governments.

Yoon's December 3 imposition of martial law, the first of its kind in more than four decades, lasted only six hours, but has caused massive political tumult, halted diplomatic activities and rattled financial markets. Yoon was forced to lift his decree after parliament unanimously voted to overturn it. Yoon sent hundreds of troops and police officers to the parliament in an effort to stop the vote, but they withdrew after the parliament rejected Yoon's decree. No major violence

occurred.

Opposition parties have accused Yoon of rebellion, saying a president in South Korea is allowed to declare martial law only during wartime or similar emergencies and would have no right to suspend parliament's operations even in those cases.

Yoon has rejected the charges and vowed to "fight to the end." He said the deployment of troops to parliament was aimed at issuing a warning to the Democratic Party, which he called an "anti-state force" that abused its control of parliament by holding up the government's budget bill for next year and repeatedly pushing to impeach top officials.

Law enforcement institutions are investigating Yoon and others involved in the martial law case over possible rebellion and other allegations. They've arrested Yoon's defence minister and police chief and two other high-level figures.

Yoon has immunity from most criminal prosecution as president, but that doesn't extend to allegations of rebellion or treason. He's been banned from leaving South Korea, but observers doubt that authorities will detain him because of the potential for clashes with his presidential security service.

South Korean media reported that prosecutors asked Yoon to appear at a prosecution office for questioning on Sunday but he refused to do so. The reports said prosecutors plan to ask him to appear again. Repeated calls to a prosecutors' office in Seoul were unanswered.

Lee called for authorities to speed up their probes and said that an independent investigation by a special prosecutor should be launched as soon as possible. Last week, the National Assembly passed a law calling for such an investigation.

Ousted PM Hasina involved in enforced disappearance: Bangladesh commission

AGENCIES
DHAKA, DEC 15

An inquiry commission set up by the interim government in Bangladesh has said that it found evidence implicating deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and top-ranking military and police officials from her regime in alleged incidents of enforced disappearance.

The five-member Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances submitted an interim report titled "Unfolding The Truth" to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus on Saturday.

The commission estimated that there would be more than 3,500 enforced disappearances.

"The commission has found evidence of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's involvement as the instructor in the incidents of enforced disappearance," the press wing of the office of Chief Adviser said in a statement on Saturday night.

It said the deposed premier's defence adviser Major General (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, former director general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre and sacked Major General Ziaul Ahsanand senior police



officers Monirul Islam and Mohammad Harun-Or-Rashid and several other senior officials were found to be involved in those incidents.

The ex-military and police officers are on the run, mostly believed to be abroad since the ouster of Hasina's Awami League regime on August 5 following a student-led uprising.

According to the statement, retired Supreme Court judge Mainul Islam Chowdhury, the chairman of the commission, told Yunus that during investigations they found a "systematic design" that allowed incidents of enforced disappearances to go undetected.

"Individuals carrying out enforced disappearance or extrajudicial killing (even) lacked knowledge about victims," Chowdhury said.

The report said the police's elite anti-crime Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), which draws men from the Army, Navy, Air

Force, regular police and other law enforcement agencies had collaborated with each other to pick up, torture and keep victims in detention and deliberately segmented the operations.

The commission simultaneously proposed the abolition of the RAB alongside scrapping or thoroughly amending the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009.

Rights activist and commission member Sajjad Hossain said they recorded 1,676 complaints of enforced disappearances and, so far, have examined 758 of them. Of these, 200 people or 27 per cent of the victims never returned while those who returned were mostly shown on records as arrested.

Besides the chairman, the commission comprises Justice Farid Ahmed Shibli, rights activist Nur Khan, private BRAC University teacher Nabila Idris and rights activist Sajjad Hossain.

At a press conference

earlier, the commission announced that they had found eight secret detention centres in Dhaka and its outskirts.

The panel chairman on Saturday informed Yunus that they would deliver another interim report in March and would require at least another year to complete the scrutiny of all allegations they had received.

"You are doing a really very important job. We are ready to give you all kinds of support that you need," Yunus was quoted as saying. TV channels and social media carried interviews with several victims of the alleged enforced disappearance, including former military officers and opposition activists who were active in opposing Hasina's regime.

While receiving the report yesterday, Yunus said he would visit some of the joint interrogation cells and secret detention centres as he wanted first-hand knowledge about the sufferings of the victims.

The report called for the creation of a new law criminalising enforced disappearances.

Commission members also told the government to repeal laws under the Armed Police Battalions Ordinance that grants law enforcers indemnity for acts done in "good faith".

UN special envoy for Syria calls for sanctions relief following Assad's fall

AGENCIES
DAMASCUS, DEC 15

The United Nations special envoy for Syria on Sunday called for a quick end to Western sanctions after the ouster of President Bashar Assad. The Syrian government has been under strict sanctions by the United States, European Union and others for years as a result of Assad's brutal response to what began as peaceful anti-government protests in 2011 and later spiralled into a civil war. The conflict has

killed nearly half a million people and displaced half the country's pre-war population of 23 million. Rebuilding has been stymied to a large degree by sanctions that aimed to prevent rebuilding of damaged infrastructure and property in government-held areas in the absence of a political solution.

"We can hopefully see a quick end to the sanctions so that we can see really a rallying around building of Syria," UN envoy Geir Pedersen told reporters during a visit to Damascus.

Pedersen came to the Syrian capital to meet with officials of the new interim government set up by the former opposition forces who toppled Assad, led by the Islamic militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS.

HTS is designated a terrorist group by the US, which could also complicate reconstruction efforts, but officials in Washington have indicated that the Biden administration is considering removing the designation.

The interim govern-

ment is set to govern until March, but it has not yet made clear the process under which a new permanent administration would replace it.

"We need to get the political process underway that is inclusive of all Syrians," Pedersen said. "That process obviously needs to be led by the Syrians themselves."

He called for "justice and accountability for crimes" committed during the war and for the international community to step up humanitarian aid.

Pakistanis celebrate Raj Kapoor's 100th birth anniversary at historic Kapoor House in Peshawar



AGENCIES
PESHAWAR, DEC 15

Pakistani cultural enthusiasts and film lovers gathered at the iconic Kapoor House in Peshawar on Saturday to celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of legendary Bollywood filmmaker and actor Raj Kapoor.

A highlight of the event, reinforcing the significance of Peshawar's ties to cinematic history, was the cutting of a cake to mark the birth centenary of Kapoor - one of the most influential figures of Indian cinema.

Participants also welcomed the World Bank's announcement to allocate Rs 100 million each for the restoration of the ancestral homes of Raj Kapoor and fellow Bollywood legend Dilip Kumar. Both homes, located near the famous Qissa Khawani Bazaar, are celebrated as symbols of Peshawar's deep ties to

Indian cinema. The gathering, jointly organised by the Cultural Heritage Council (CHC) and the Directorate of Archaeology Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, called for larger-scale events to commemorate the legacy of Kapoor. The attendees emphasised Kapoor's connection to Pakistan, where he was born in Peshawar's Dhaki Nalbandi, and praised his enduring influence on cinema.

Muhammad Hussain Haideri, Secretary of the Pak-Iran Trade and Investment Council, was the chief guest of the event.

Born on December 14, 1924, Kapoor was the son of stalwart actor Prithviraj Kapoor. He made classics like "Awaraz", "Barsaat", "Shree 420", "Sangam" and "Mera Naam Joker" during his illustrious 40-year career. He died in 1988.

Ibrahim Zia, a renowned writer and researcher on the Indian film industry

who has extensively studied film legends with roots in Peshawar and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, presented rare photographs of Raj Kapoor from his childhood and early adolescence years in Peshawar.

He also shared insights into the actor's illustrious career, starting in the 1940s. Zia highlighted Kapoor's versatility across genres, from romance and comedy to tragedy, which solidified his status as the "Greatest Showman of Indian Cinema".

The Kapoor House stands near the ancestral homes of Dilip Kumar and Shah Rukh Khan, connecting two generations of Indian film legends to Peshawar. Dilip Kumar, celebrated for his naturalistic acting, and Shah Rukh Khan, a modern-day Bollywood superstar, further underscore the city's historical contribution to Indian cinema.

At least 11 dead in French territory of Mayotte as Cyclone Chido causes devastating damage

AGENCIES
CAPE TOWN, DEC 15

At least 11 people have died after Cyclone Chido caused devastating damage in the French territory of Mayotte in the Indian Ocean, France's Interior Ministry said Sunday.

The ministry said it was proving difficult to get a precise tally of the dead and injured amid fears the death toll will increase. A hospital in Mayotte reported that nine people were in critical condition in the hospital and 246 others were injured.

The tropical cyclone blew through the southeastern Indian Ocean, also affecting the nearby islands of Comoros and Madagascar. Mayotte was directly in the path of the cyclone and suffered extensive damage on Saturday, officials said. The prefect of Mayotte said it was the worst cyclone to hit Mayotte in 90 years.

French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau said Saturday night after an emergency meeting in Paris that there were fears that the death toll in Mayotte "will be high."

India plans intact; to add more headcount despite global turbulence: Nissan

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 15

Japanese auto major Nissan's plans to turn around its Indian operations remain intact, and it is looking to increase headcount in the country despite the turbulence it is facing globally, according to a senior company official.

The company, which has increased headcount at its Chennai plant by 600 to add a third shift, does not foresee steps to cut 9,000 jobs and 20 per cent production globally having an impact on India as long as it remains competitive in the market, Nissan India Operations President Frank Torres said.

"Nissan is betting big on India...and the plans (for India) remain intact despite this global turbulence," he said.

Torres was responding to a query on whether the announcement for global job and production cuts will have an impact on Nissan's India operations.

"Contrary to the perception, in India, we are strengthening our members, growing our production, and we just included almost 600 new employees in our manufac-

turing plant in Chennai," Torres said.

"This move is to help the production shifts. We are expanding production very soon with two new models...this is despite the global action, which involves restructuring. We don't forecast that the impact will be in India because our plans remain untouched. Of course, the key point for us is to keep being competitive. Because, in the end, this is what is considered most important inside Nissan."

Earlier in July this year, Nissan India announced that it is looking to introduce five models over the next 30 months as it looks to turn around its operations in the fast-growing Indian car market. The company has set a target of tripling its domestic and export volumes to 1 lakh each per annum by the end of FY26.

In November this year, Nissan announced that globally, it would cut 9,000 jobs and production by 20 per cent as part of a turnaround plan and cut costs by 400 billion yen (USD 2.6 billion).

"There is no risk, or there is no impact for India as far as the plans for India are concerned, they will remain intact. We



will keep on being competitive, right in terms of product, in terms of everything, including our partners, suppliers and dealers," Torres noted.

The third shift at the Chennai plant started some weeks ago, as the company targets full capacity utilisation of the manufacturing plant.

"It means that we have grown one full new shift. And then also moving forward towards 2026, where we will need to put our manufacturing plant at full capacity with both lines at three shifts. As of today, we are modifying one of them for the new models," Torres added.

If the company achieves its volume forecast with the new models by the end of 2026, he said, "This

will put the plant utilisation at more than 80 per cent, which will require more headcount than today."

"Increasing headcount is part of our commitment. We have committed to the Tamil Nadu government to grow our headcount next year based on the new investments, and we are well supported by the Tamil Nadu government."

Moreover, he said, the Renault-Nissan alliance had committed to more than 2,000 employment creations not just in manufacturing, but also in other areas like R&D as part of their USD 600 million investment plan announced in 2023.

Torres also said the company is now refurbishing one line to adapt to

new technology, such as EVs, ahead of the planned launch of an electric SUV.

"We are planning to grow our volumes both in domestic and export markets. Our target is to increase three-times our domestic and export volume by FY23...Our plans remain intact, and our plans for the new models remain untouched," Torres asserted.

When asked about sales growth, Torres said in the ongoing fiscal 2024-25, Nissan India is looking at over 45 per cent total sales growth at over 1.05 lakh units against 72,666 units sold in the previous fiscal on the back of its upgraded compact SUV Magnite.

The company has expanded its export market to more than 65 countries from just 14 nations in 2023, with the introduction of the left-hand drive version of the Magnite, he added.

The company is targeting to export over 74,200 units in 2024-25 against 42,597 in the previous fiscal.

In the domestic market, Nissan India expects sales to grow by 4 per cent to 31,155 units in 2024-25 compared to 30,065 in the previous fiscal.

NBCC Ltd aims to reach Rs 1 lakh crore of consolidated work order book by March

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 15

State-owned NBCC Ltd is targeting to reach Rs 1 lakh crore of consolidated order book by March next year from the current Rs 84,400 crore as the company looks to expand business across India.

NBCC (India) Ltd is into Project Management Consultancy (PMC), Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) and real estate businesses.

"NBCC has an order book of around Rs 84,000 crore. We are targeting to take Rs 1 lakh crore at the end of this financial year," NBCC Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) K P Mahadevaswamy told investors.

According to a transcript of discussion with investors, he said the total order book at a consolidated level is Rs 84,400 crore, of which NBCC's share is about Rs 70,400 crore.

The remaining is order book of its subsidiaries.

The order book of HSCL stood at Rs 8,093 crore, HSCL Rs 5,915 crore, and NSL Rs 200 crore.

Of the total order book, Mahadevaswamy said the PMC/EPC contributes around 55 per cent and 45 per cent in redevelopment.



On execution timeline, he said the redevelopment projects take 4-5 years, whereas normal PMC takes only 1.5-2 years.

On behalf of the central government, NBCC has undertaken redevelopment work of many housing colonies in the national capital.

Recently, NBCC has been appointed as a project management consultant to complete Supertech Ltd's 16 real estate projects at nearly Rs 9,500 crore, a move that will provide relief to thousands of homebuyers.

NBCC is already completing stalled projects of the Amrapali Group.

In a regulatory filing on Thursday, the company said the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), has "appointed NBCC (India) Ltd as Project Management Consultant for the completion of 16 projects of Supertech Ltd".

NBCC will complete 16 projects, comprising 49,748 houses in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, and Karnataka.

"The tentative construction cost of the project is about Rs 9,445 crore, including 3 per cent contingency. The consultancy fee has been fixed as 8 per cent, including 1 per cent marketing fee," NBCC said.

The company has been appointed as a consultant "with no liability, and it will complete the Supertech projects within three years".

NBCC's total income rose to Rs 2,525.95 crore during the second quarter of this fiscal year from Rs 2,134.36 crore in the corresponding period of the preceding year.

The company posted a 53 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 125.13 crore for the September quarter as against Rs 81.90 crore in the year-ago period.

Sarovar Hotels bets big on highway properties; 80 projects in pipeline

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, DEC 15

Hospitality firm Sarovar Hotels is broadening focus towards highway hotels and resorts close to major cities, capitalising on the country's rapidly expanding roads network, a top official said.

The hotel chain has 80 projects in the pipeline over the next few years as part of its expansion plan, he said.

"Highway hotels and resort-concept properties close to cities, within three-four hour journey, are a new high-growth segment for hospitality, at a time when competition is getting intense in urban centres," Sarovar Hotels Chairman Ajay K Bakaya told PTI in an interview.

He said this strategic shift aligns with the ongoing road infrastructure development in the country. Enhanced connectivity is opening up opportunities for leisure and business travel, creating demand for accessible and convenient accommodation options, he said.

"We haven't seen such development of highways in the past. Around 10,000 km of national highways are being constructed annually, which is remarkable. It is connecting places, and creating opportunities for highway hotels and resorts closer to cities," Bakaya said.

Sarovar Hotels, a part of the French Louvre



Hotels Group, operates a chain of 135 hotels across 85 locations with 9,000 keys, mostly under management contracts and corporate services, but only a handful (four-five) of those are specifically designed as highway and resort properties.

The Louvre Hotels Group is a subsidiary of Jin Jiang International Holdings Co Ltd, one of China's largest tourism and travel conglomerates.

"There are new 80 hotel projects lined up. We will be adding 15-20 hotels comfortably every year over the next few years. We expect to cross 150 hotels by 2025, with a total of 12,000 keys. However, a limited number of these upcoming properties will be under the highway hotels and resorts segment," Bakaya said.

Noting that the hospitality business is capital-intensive, the top company official advocated for "infrastructure status" for the sector.

Bakaya hoped the sector would get that tag in the upcoming budget,

stating that it would facilitate access to longer-term credit lines - 15 years or more - compared to the current 10-year terms, unlocking massive investment in hospitality, including the emerging segments.

"The corporate business currently accounts for 70 per cent of our total revenue in India, although this may marginally decline to around 65 per cent as resorts and highway motels contribute more in the coming years," Bakaya said.

The company is actively working to increase the contribution from the resort and highway hotel segments.

"Sarovar Hotels is experiencing robust growth, with an overall CAGR of 15 per cent, which includes 9 per cent from existing properties and 6 per cent from new projects being added annually," Bakaya said, expressing confidence that the strong growth trajectory will continue, with demand outpacing supply in the near future.

Auto Expo to see highest-ever participation of vehicle manufacturers: SIAM

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 15

The upcoming edition of Auto Expo will see participation of 34 vehicle manufacturers, the largest number of participants till date, since the first edition of the marquee event in 1986.

The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) would be organising the 17th edition of Auto Expo, 'The Motor Show', under the aegis of the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 from January 17-22 at Bharat Mandapam, in partnership with ACMA and CII.

"Around 34 vehicle manufacturers would be participating at the exhibition and showcasing technologies with respect to multiple powertrains," SIAM Director General Rajesh Menon told PTI.



It is the highest-ever participation in the history of the event so far, he added.

Automakers participating in the event include Tata Motors, Maruti Suzuki, Mahindra & Mahindra, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, Hyundai Motor India, Kia Motor India, JSW MG Motor and Skoda Auto Volkswagen India, he stated.

Luxury carmakers like BMW, Mercedes, Porsche India, and BYD would also

be showcasing their products during the event.

In the two-wheeler segment, there would be participation from TVS Motor Company, Bajaj Auto, Hero MotoCorp, Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India, Suzuki Motorcycle, and India Yamaha.

Similarly, Volvo Eicher Commercial Vehicles, Ashok Leyland, JBM and Cummins India would be participating in the event.

Menon said some of the pure EV players like Ather

Energy, TI Clean Mobility, Eka Mobility, Ola Electric and Vinfast would also be participating this time in the Auto Expo.

SIAM would also be setting up separate thematic pavilions on decarbonisation, circularity, electrification and road safety at the Expo.

The Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 will be held between January 17 and 22 next year at Bharat Mandapam, Yashobhoomi (India International Convention and Expo Centre) Dwarka, and India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida, simultaneously.

The last edition of the Auto Expo was held from January 11-18, 2023, at the India Expo Mart, Greater Noida. The inaugural Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2024 was held from February 1-3.

India's import of Russian oil drops in Nov on shrinking discounts

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 15

India's import of Russian crude oil dropped in November to its lowest level since June 2022 but the Kremlin continues to be the biggest source of oil for India, according to a monthly tracker report of a European think tank.

India became the second biggest buyer of Russian crude oil since Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022, with purchases rising from less than one per cent of the total oil imported to almost 40 per cent of the country's total oil purchases.

The rise was primarily because the Russian crude oil was available at a discount to other internationally traded oil due to the price cap and the European nations shunning purchases from Moscow.

"India's imports of Russian crude oil dropped by a massive 55 per cent in November - the lowest figure since June 2022," the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said in its latest report.

Russia remained India's top oil supplier, followed by Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

"China has bought 47 per cent of Russia's crude exports, followed by India (37 per cent), the EU (6 per cent), and Turkey (6 per cent)," CREA said without giving absolute numbers.

In November, there was a 17 per cent month-on-month increase in the discount on Russia's Urals grade crude oil to an average of USD 6.01 per barrel compared to Brent crude oil. The discount on the ESPO grade narrowed by a massive 15 per cent and was traded at an average discount of USD 3.88 per barrel while that on the Sokol blend narrowed by 2 per cent to USD 6.65 per barrel, it said.

Over 1500 participate in 'Ek Bharat, Hum Bharat' padyatra in Amritsar

AGENCIES
AMRITSAR, DEC 16

As many as 1500 people participated in 'Ek Bharat, Hum Bharat' padyatra which was organised by MaitriBodh Parivaar at Funland Company Bagh here on Sunday.

The participants united to spread the univer-

sal message of love and peace. This historic event was not just a journey but a mission to revive the nation's soul, emphasizing the significance of shared cultural heritage in fostering humanity's collective growth. With a vision to unite the world as one family, the padyatra was aimed to reignite the values

of love, unity, and peace deeply woven into India's cultural heritage.

Since its inception in 2013, MaitriBodh Parivaar has been at the forefront of offering spiritual programs and social reform projects, transforming lives and nurturing Maitri Bhaav—the spirit of love and friendship.

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 15

GNG Electronics Ltd has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO).

The proposed IPO is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 825 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 97 lakh equity shares by promoters, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Saturday.

The OFS comprises sale of 35,000 shares each by Sharad Khandelwal and Vidhi Sharad Khandelwal and 96.30 lakh shares by Amiable Electronics.

Proceeds of the fresh issue to the tune of Rs 320 crore will be utilised for the debt payment, Rs 260 crore for funding working capital requirements of the company and the



remaining amount for general corporate purposes.

GNG Electronics is one of the leading refurbisher of laptops and desktops with significant presence across India, the US, Europe, Africa, and the UAE.

The company operates under the brand "Electronics Bazaar", with presence across the full refurbishment value chain from

sourcing to refurbishment to sales, to after-sale services and providing warranty.

The company's comprehensive process of refurbishment of ICT devices such as laptops, desktops, tablets, servers, premium smartphones, mobile workstations, and accessories ensures that such devices are similar to new in terms of both perfor-

mance and aesthetics, and able to offer laptops at one-third price of new devices and other devices like desktops, tablets, servers, premium smart phones, mobile workstations and accessories at 35-50 per cent price of new devices.

GNG Electronics is India's largest Microsoft-authorized refurbisher, in terms of refurbishing capability, as of FY24.

The company is a certified refurbishment partner with Lenovo and HP, which are the top two global brands, in terms of market share of 24 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively, as of calendar year 2023.

Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors, IIFL Capital Services, and JM Financial are the book-running lead managers to the issue.

NR-II secures spot in PowerGrid Cricket semifinals 2024

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 15

It was a day filled with action as ten teams clashed on the second day of the POWERGRID Inter Regional Cricket Tournament 2024. All the teams performed to best of their abilities to outclass each other. It was a day where players showcased their style and skill to get better off their opponents.

Today five matches were played in three grounds. The details of the five matches is as under:

NR-II defeated NER by 43 runs. Batting first NER scored 87/9 in their stipulated 20 overs. In reply NR-II overhauled the score in 15.2 overs. Vinod Atri of NR-II who took 4 wickets for 21 runs in 4 overs was declared man of the match. With this victory NR-II became the first team of the tournament to reach the semifinals.

NR-III defeated WR-I by 37 RUNS. Batting first NR-III scored 159/6 in 20 overs and later restricted WR-I to 122/8 in 20 overs. Md Kaif of NR-III who scored 71 runs and took 1 wicket for 8 runs in two overs was declared man of the match.

CC trounced SR-II by 75 runs. Batting first CC



Scored 158 for 4 wickets in 20 overs. And then bundled out SR-II on 83 runs in 18.3 overs. Mukesh Bhakar of CC who took 4 wickets was declared man of the match. NR-I defeated ER-I by 40 runs. Batting first NR-I scored 167/7 in 20 overs. ER-I in return managed only 127/7 in their 20 overs. Kuldeep Rawat of NR-I who scored 14 runs in 6 balls and took 3 wickets was declared man of the match.

ER-II defeated SR-I. Batting first ER-II made 118/9 in 20 overs. Later ER-II bowled out SR-I for 102 runs in 18.3 overs. Pradip Rajak of ER-II was

declared man of the match for his three wicket haul.

POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED is a Maharatna Enterprise under the Ministry of Power having its regional headquarters in Northern Region-II at Jammu. POWERGRID is engaged in inter-state bulk power transmission. POWERGRID has 178,975 ckm of transmission lines, 280 Substations, and more than 5,43,961 MVA of transformation capacity. With the adoption of the latest technological tools and techniques, and enhanced use of automation and digital solutions,

POWERGRID has been able to maintain an average transmission system availability >99%. POWERGRID's performance has been consistently Excellent by achieving very difficult measurable parameters which are set in the MoU signed with the Ministry of Power, Government of India.

POWERGRID, Northern Region-II with headquarters in Jammu has its Transmission System spread over in the States of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, parts of Haryana, and UT of Chandigarh, Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir.

Tim Southee's flourish but New Zealand erratic on first day of third Test against England

AGENCIES
HAMILTON, DEC 15

New Zealand steadily squandered a good start, slumping from 172/2 to 231/7 before rallying to 315/9 at stumps on Saturday, the first day of the third Test against England.

Mitchell Santner hit the last ball of the day for six to reach his fourth Test half-century and was 50 not out, while Will O'Rourke had yet to score. The New Zealand tail added 76 runs in the last eight overs of the day to bring some balance back into the game after the failure of the middle order.

After a 105-run opening partnership between Tom Latham and Will Young, New Zealand enjoyed the rare experience of holding the upper hand over England in this series, which so far has been one-sided in favour of the visitors, who hold an unassailable 2-0 lead.

England won the toss and chose to bowl in Hamilton and by lunch, New Zealand were 93/0. At that point, it appeared England captain Ben Stokes might have misread or over-estimated the conditions when



he decided to send New Zealand in.

Latham and Young (42) set a sound platform for the New Zealand innings when they put on 105 for the first wicket, the Kiwis' best opening partnership in 28 Tests. Young was selected in place of Devon Conway whose wife has just given birth to their first child.

Kane Williamson reached 44 on his home pitch on which he averages 94. Then he clamped down on a ball from Matthew Potts which bounced back onto his stumps and

he tried vainly to kick it away.

In quick succession New Zealand lost Daryl Mitchell (14), Glenn Phillips (5) and second Test century-maker Tom Blundell (21), all to unwise shots.

Santner and Matt Henry put on 41 for the eighth wicket before Henry (8) was brilliantly caught by Harry Brook off Stokes.

Southee's sixes Henry's dismissal brought out Tim Southee in his 107th and last Test for New Zealand. Southee will retire at the end of the

series aged 36 and is New Zealand's second-highest Test wicket-taker with 389 scalps so far.

Southee achieved an unusual record for a bowler when he equalled Chris Gayle's tally of sixes in Test cricket to move to the joint-fourth spot in the all-time list with his 98th six. Ben Stokes leads the all-time list with 133 sixes in 110 Tests so far. Southee, who received a guard of honour from the England fielders when he walked out, hammered three sixes in his quick-fire 10-ball 23.

Siraj is getting stick from 'saints' of Australian cricket, writes sarcastic Sunil Gavaskar

AGENCIES
BRISBANE, DEC 15

Indian legend Sunil Gavaskar has called out the double standards of the Australian cricket pundits for their criticism of Mohammed Siraj's aggressive send-off to Travis Head in the Day/Night Test in Adelaide.

Siraj and Head were at loggerheads after the Indian pacer got the Australian centurion bowled and gave him a send-off. While Head said that Siraj's reaction was uncalled for, the Indian pacer on his part countered that the southpaw never said "well bowled" which he claimed to have told the media.

ICC warned Head and Siraj was fined 20 percent of his match fee but what has irked Gavaskar is the holier than thou attitude of some former Australian players.

"Siraj is getting the stick



Morning Herald.

Gavaskar took a dig at the double standards about how the same people support boorish behaviour from their own. "But the same people will cheer if an Aussie quick gives a similar send-off to an English batter during next summer's Ashes." "There were some suggestions in the media that the Australians should get back to being the mongrels they once were. So, do mongrels simply purr, or do they bark, too?" He was however surprised at Siraj's outburst considering that IPL had lessened the animosity among players.

"Siraj's outburst was surprising because if the Indian Premier League has done one thing, apart from making Aussie cricketers and coaches millionaires, it has also taken away to a huge extent the animosity that previously existed in the game."

from all the "saints" in Australian cricket who, of course, were known for their impeccable behaviour on the field. It may have incensed Australian

fans that Siraj's fiery send-off was directed at Head, who scored a magnificent century and was also the local boy," Gavaskar wrote in his column for Sydney

Travis Head, Steve Smith tons deflate India as Australia reach 405 for 7 on Day 2

AGENCIES
BRISBANE, DEC 15

Travis Head continued to bully India by smashing a second successive hundred while Steve Smith clawed his way back to form with his 33rd century as Australia reached an imposing 405 for 7 at the end of second day of the third Test here Sunday.

Head, who cracked 140 in the previous Test, hit a brilliant 152 off just 160 balls and added 241 runs for the fourth wicket with Smith (101 off 190 balls), who scored one of his more laboured hundreds in the traditional format.

For India, Jasprit Bumrah (5/72) stood out from the pack with his 12th five-wicket haul while Akash Deep (0/78) despite bowling well was distinctly unlucky.

Mohammed Siraj (1/97)



developed some discomfort in one of his legs and didn't look fully fit. Ravindra Jadeja (0/76) was an

absolute disappointment with no help on offer from the track.

1st Innings: 405 for 7 in 101 overs. (Travis Head 152, Steve Smith 101, Jasprit Bumrah 5/72).

AGENCIES
SINGAPORE, DEC 15

The "multi-millionaire" tag does "mean a lot" to new world champion D Gukesh but he doesn't play the game for material gains but for that unbridled joy, which he has been able to retain since the time a chess board used to be the "coolest toy" for him.

Gukesh, the 18-year-old from Chennai, is now richer by Rs 11.45 crore which he will receive from FIDE as prize money for beating Ding Liren of China in the final.

Gukesh's father Rajnikanth gave up his career as an ENT surgeon to accompany his son on the circuit while mother Padmakumari, who is a microbiologist, became the sole earner of the family. Asked what exactly does being a multi-millionaire mean to him, Gukesh said, "It means a lot. When I got into chess, we (as a family) had to make some hard decisions. My parents had gone through financial and emotional hardships. Now, we are more comfortable and parents don't need to think about those things," Gukesh told FIDE in an interview.

"Personally, money isn't the reason I play chess," he said. He always tries to remember why he started playing the game when he



got his first chess board.

"I am still the kid who loves chess. It used to be the coolest toy," the reticent world champion explained.

For him, his parents mean the world. Gukesh's dad doubles up as his manager by taking care of all the off-board activities and allowing him to concentrate on the game, while his mother is the emotional and spiritual pillar of strength.

"She (mother) still says, I will be happy to know that you are a great chess player but I would be happier to hear that you are a greater person," Gukesh said. Still in his teens, Gukesh feels that as a student of the game, the more he learns about chess, the more aware he will become of how little he knows.

"Even the greatest of players make a lot of mistakes. Even though technology is so advanced, there is still a lot to learn about chess. I strongly

believe that the more you learn something, more you realise that you don't know that thing.

"Whenever I am on the chess board, I feel I learn something new. It's a process of unlimited beauty."

Journey and Destination both are "important" The process of the journey is very important but for Gukesh, it is even more important to be clear about the destination.

"For example, I played a beautiful game and lost, I will feel sad. And if I win despite not playing a great game, I will be happy. I tend to look at the result," he said.

Desire to win is more than the fear of losing

The quality of games in the final was found to be pretty drab by experts but Gukesh doesn't believe that his desire to win is trumped by fear of losing.

"My desire to win is stronger than the fear of losing," he said, while expressing a bit of sur-

prise as to how Liren easily agreed to a draw in the second game.

"I had a bit more freedom to attack as he was defending tenaciously. When he went too easy on me in the second game after I played a horrible first game, I felt like he could have pushed me a bit but it was a comfortable draw." However, he isn't too surprised that Liren opted for the "safer routes".

"It was not a huge surprise. He was tending towards safer routes, maybe he should have taken more chances."

Dance and Ice cream For someone who believes he has two left feet when it comes to dancing, his impromptu jig after receiving the Chess Olympiad Trophy went viral, and now he fears his friends won't leave him so easily.

"Earlier, my friends would dance and I would sit in a corner. After the Olympiad win, the spirits were high and it was (the dance) in the moment. But the video went viral and now my friends said that 'you had danced there and now you will have to join us'," he smiled.

He thanked the chef in Singapore for providing him with his comfort food, "south Indian delicacies" during the final.

"I haven't had ice cream for one year. Maybe I will have one."

Simran Shaikh tops WPL 2025 Auction

AGENCIES
BENGALURU, DEC 15

The Women's Premier League (WPL) 2025 mini-auction saw leg-spinner Simran Shaikh emerge as the biggest acquisition, with Mumbai Indians securing her for a record Rs 1.90 crore.

Simran's selection underscores her growing reputation as a game-changer in T20 cricket, making her one of the most sought-after players in the auction.

Adding to Mumbai's



as West Indies all-rounder Deandra Dottin was snapped up by Gujarat Giants for Rs 1.70 crore.

Renowned for her explosive performances, Dottin recently shone in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024, where she registered the most four-wicket hauls, including a memorable 4/22 against New Zealand. She also contributed 82 runs at a strike rate of 167.3, cementing her status as a

marquee player. Despite

these highlights, the auction threw up surprises as prominent Indian players Sneh Rana and Poonam Yadav went unsold in the initial rounds. Meanwhile, Royal Challengers Bengaluru signed Prema Rawat for Rs 1.2 crore, and Delhi Capitals acquired N. Charani for Rs 55 lakh, rounding off a dynamic day of bidding.

With the accelerated bidding round on the horizon, teams are expected to intensify their strategies to secure the best remaining talent.

Suresh Gupta, Mohammad Aijaz inaugurate JKRLM's 3 day exhibition 'Ashakari'

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 14

Principal Secretary, Culture, Suresh Kumar Gupta and Secretary, Rural Development Department, Mohammad Aijaz on Sunday inaugurated a three day exhibition of art, craft and cuisines "Ashakari" by the skilled and empowered SHG members of Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM) at Kala Kendra Jammu.

Being organised by the JKRLM, the event celebrates the talent and craftsmanship of women Self-Help Group (SHG) members from across the Union Territory. The exhibition, being held from December 14 to 16, features 40 vibrant stalls showcasing the rich art and craft of J&K.

Suresh Kumar Gupta, praised the economic independence and empowerment of women, stating that it was a shared goal with the Prime Minister to see more and more "Lakshmi Didi's." He commended the women for their resilience and abil-



ity to stand on their own feet, as demonstrated by the exhibition.

Secretary RDD, spoke about the symbol of hope that the Ashakari represents for the self help groups. He mentioned the significant impact of over 90,000 SHGs in Jammu and Kashmir, covering 7.5 lakh households.

The Secretary also emphasized the success of the Lakshmi Didi initiative, part of Prime Minister's vision to economically empower women. He said that JKRLM is not just a scheme; it's a movement. Women in even the remotest areas have overcome obstacles and demonstrated their strength.

The journey ahead will continue to break barriers, he added.

They also visited different stalls which offers a mix of handicrafts, handlooms and culinary delights representing both the Jammu and Kashmir divisions.

A distinctive highlight of the exhibition was the live demonstration of traditional art forms including pottery, grass handicrafts, Basholi art and Crewel embroidery. The visitors can witness artisans skillfully crafting their products, a testament to the region's cultural legacy.

The exhibition brings together an eclectic mix of

products that highlight the diverse cultural heritage and craftsmanship of J&K. Some of the featured items included Chabhri Binna from Reasi, Saffron from Pulwama, Black Zeera from Kishtwar, essential oils and Natural Fragrance diffusers from Bhaderwah, handicrafts and handlooms from Anantnag, spices and pottery items from Samba, Picanut and Wheat Pine Baskets from Poonch, Jute bags and crocheted items from Jammu, Willow baskets and handbags from Ganderbal, hand-ground maize flour and pickles from Rajouri, Paper-Mache items from Bandipora, Basholi Pashmina shawls and Basholi paintings from Kathua and Crewel embroidery covers from Kupwara and Budgam. Mission Director, JKRLM, Dr Shubra Sharma, said that the exhibition symbolizes how women with skills can bring new hope for their empowerment.

"Through this platform, they can showcase their handmade and handcrafted products, engage with

the public and boost their confidence," she said.

Sharma highlighted the efforts being made to prepare women for such events, including skill development in embroidery, food preparation and other crafts. "Our mission is to enhance women's skills, enabling them to earn a livelihood and become economically empowered. This platform gives them the opportunity to interact with buyers and build their confidence," she added.

She also invited the people of Jammu to attend the exhibition, urging them to support women artisans by purchasing their products.

Among others the exhibition was attended by Secretary JKAACL, Harvinder Kour, Secretary Kala Kendra, Javid Rahi, Director Rural Development, Jammu, Mumtaz Ali, Director, Panchayati Raj, Sham Lal, Chief Operating Officer, Himayat, Rajneesh Gupta, Director Animal Husbandry Jammu, Dr Waheeda Parveen and others.

Principal Secretary asks KPDCL to ensure strict adherence to power curtailment schedule

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 15

Principal Secretary, Power Development Department (PDD), H. Rajesh Prasad, today had a review meeting regarding the status of power scenario in the Union Territory here at Civil Secretariat.

"Ensure strict adherence to the power curtailment schedule besides avoiding unscheduled cuts," the Principal Secretary asked the PDD officers.

Present in the meeting were officers of KPDCL/JKPTCL including Mahmood Ahmad Shah, Managing Director KPDCL, Engineer Ruhaila Wani, Managing Director JKPTCL, Chief Engineers of various wings, Superintending Engineers, Chief Electrical Inspector and Executive Engineers of O&M and STD divisions.

A brief report about present power scenario in valley and availability of buffer stock for winter season was discussed in



detail during the meeting.

Chief Engineer Distribution KPDCL presented the details of load scenario and deliberated on the operational Load Curtailment Program (LCP). It was informed that around 8-10% of additional electricity is being supplied to valley in comparison to previous year. On an average, 1600MW are being supplied to valley with peak load to the tune of 1750MW.

The Principal Secretary asked the officers of KPDCL for providing power as per Load Curtailment schedule without any unscheduled cuts with strict monitoring of the deviation (if any). He also asked for regular monitoring of AT&C loss

of every 11kV feeder so that corrective measure be taken to plug the loss so as to provide quality and reliable power supply across the valley. He further directed the officers for intensifying enforcement drives to curb the menace of power pilferage and use of unauthorized excess load.

Rajesh Prasad also reviewed the availability of transformers (DTs) and spare material with the Divisional and Central Store of KPDCL to tackle any urgency.

Chief Engineer Distribution apprised that sufficient stock of buffer DTs and spare material is available for quick restoration of power supply in case of any outages.

Sakeena Itoo, Javed Rana visit Kotranka following tragic deaths in Budhaal village

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KOTRANKA, (RAJOURI),
DECEMBER 15

In the wake of seven tragic deaths due to an unidentified health illness in two families from Budhaal village, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare, and Education, Sakeena Itoo and Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment, and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana today visited Sub-Division Kotranka to review the situation and assess the measures being undertaken.

The Ministers chaired a detailed review meeting regarding the matter which was attended by senior officers including Secretary, Health & Medical Education, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah.

Sakeena Itoo emphasized the urgency of strengthening health systems and enforcing social distancing, expediting results from forensic laboratories, directing the Food & Supplies Department to collect and test additional samples and Animal Husbandry Department to collect and test milk samples. In addition, she directed to ensure a team of doctors remains stationed in



Kotranka besides establishing an MRI facility at Kotranka for improved diagnostic capabilities.

Javed Rana stressed the importance of conducting water quality testing in adjacent areas by the water quality monitoring team. In addition, he announced two mobile medical units (MMUs) for Rajouri and Poonch districts, with each costing around Rs 1 crore from Tribal Affairs department. These MMUs would be equipped with basic medical equipment and staffed by healthcare professionals. These have been designed to provide a range of healthcare services, including preventive care, diagnostics and treatment of common illnesses.

Further, he also direct-

ed the Forest officials to prepare and submit a DPR for water conservation through construction of check dams to address long-term water management issues.

Furthermore, a central team comprising experts from NCDC, PGIMER Chandigarh, and ICMR is enroute Rajouri to assist in the investigation and provide technical support for tackling the unknown illness.

Both the Ministers reiterated the Government's unwavering commitment towards ensuring all necessary facilities and support for the affected families and communities.

MLA Budhal, Javed Iqbal Choudhary, appreciated the efforts of the district administration.

Secretary Health

briefed the meeting on critical interventions, including deployment of rapid response teams and ensuring availability of logistics, drugs and ambulances and setting up isolation wards at GMC Rajouri, Jammu, and SMGS Hospital.

Earlier, DC Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, provided an extensive presentation outlining the timeline of events, spot maps, objectives, and case definitions. He highlighted efforts in passive and active surveillance, data collection, laboratory investigations, autopsies, environmental inquiries and descriptive epidemiology. Till date, 3,145 individuals have been surveyed through house-to-house visits and 384 special health camps have been organized in the affected areas.

The meeting was attended by SSP Rajouri, Gaurav Sikarwar, ADDC Rajouri, Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa, Director Health Services Jammu, Dr. Rakesh Mangotra, Principal GMC Rajouri, AS Bhatia, Medical Superintendent Shamim Ahmed, CMO Rajouri, Manohar Rana and other district officers.

DC Poonch reviews progress of e-KYC of Ration Cards

J1 NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 15

Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal today held a review meeting to assess the progress of eKYC of Ration Cards and other schemes of the Food Civil Supplies and Consumers Affairs Department.

The Assistant Director FCS&CA Poonch gave a detailed presentation regarding the functioning of the department. A thorough discussion ensued regarding the status of stock, supply distribution, grievance redressal mechanism and other relevant matters, during the



meeting. The Assistant Director FCS&CA informed that the district boasts ample reserves of essential commodities such as wheat, rice, LPG, petrol and diesel. To ensure wide-

spread accessibility, the department utilizes seven stores and 167 fair price shops and 20 Government sale depots for ration distribution.

The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the status of e-KYC/NFSA/Non-NFSA & PMFSS schemes focusing on three categories including Non-Priority Households (NPHH), Priority Households (PHH) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY). He reviewed e-KYC

reports from each tehsil and stressed all TSO's to ensure 100% completion of e-KYC registration under their jurisdiction and also directed ACR Poonch, SDM Surankote, SDM Mendhar and tehsildars to review the progress of e-kyc dealer wise/ FPS wise in their respective jurisdiction and ensure 100% completion of e-kyc at the earliest.

The Deputy Commissioner also reviewed the status of Aadhaar seeding, construction of Government Food Store Bala-kote, staff strength, rationalization of manpower and addressed issues of employees.

Principal Secretary Culture, Secretary RDD inaugurate Tribal Art Workshop at Kala Kendra

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 15

Principal Secretary, Culture and School Education, Suresh Kumar Gupta and Secretary, Rural Development Department, Mohammad Aijaz, jointly inaugurated a Tribal Art workshop at the GR Santosh Gallery, Kala Kendra, Jammu.

The workshop was a collaborative effort of the Kala Kendra Society, Jammu and the Department of Painting, Institute of Music and Fine Arts (IMFA), University of Jammu.

Speaking on the occasion, Suresh Kumar Gupta emphasized the need for artists, painters, and sculptors to explore indigenous art forms and promote tribal culture through their creative works. He lauded the enthusiasm of the participants for engaging with



themes related to tribal life and heritage.

Mohammad Aijaz highlighted the role of art in tribal and rural development. He urged officers from the Rural Development Department to integrate local artists into the Rural Livelihood Mission and guide rural women in adding creative dimensions to their traditional arts.

Dr. Javid Rahi, Secretary of Kala Kendra Society, informed that the event saw participation from 30 Fine Arts students.

The workshop aimed to inspire the young generation to focus on Tribal Art alongside other contemporary forms. Renowned artist Madhusudan Das from Delhi was invited to train the participants in the nuances of Tribal Art.

Dr. Milan Sharma, Head of the Painting Department, IMFA, shared that the workshop showcased 30 unique artworks focusing on Tribal Art. She noted that this initiative has offered the students a deeper understanding of Tribal Art, fulfilling a critical gap in their academic

and creative journeys. Madhusudan Das, the visiting expert, appreciated the rich tribal art traditions of Jammu and Kashmir, which he believes need greater recognition. He expressed his commitment towards popularising the Tribal Art among the younger generation across India.

The workshop was coordinated by IMFA faculty members Rachita Dutta and Ankush Kesar.

Rohit Verma, Sukhjeet Singh and Anish Tickoo stated that this workshop will help in conceptualising new dimensions towards Tribal Art. They, in their separate lectures, remarked that the workshop's practical approach has allowed the students to explore the vibrant imagery, colours and stories inherent in Tribal Art, paving the way for a new creative language in their works.

Horticulture Department organizes one-day farmers' awareness program in Udhampur

J1 NEWS SERVICE
UDHAMPUR, DECEMBER 15

A day long farmers' awareness programme was organized by the Department of Horticulture Udhampur, here at village Kalsote Block Mounгри of District Udhampur. Member Legislative Assembly Udhampur West, Pawan Kumar Gupta was the chief guest while Chief Horticulture Officer Brij Vallabh Gupta presided over the programme. As many as 300 farmers from adjoining areas participated in the camp. The Chief Horticulture Officer, while welcoming the chief guest and other dignitaries, briefed about the various developmental schemes and projects being undertaken under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme. He advised the Farmers to adopt walnut cultivation under the Revised Modified High Density Scheme.



While addressing the gathering, the MLA encouraged the farmers to avail benefits of various schemes and initiatives of the Agriculture and Horticulture Department. He also recommended the farmers to adopt High Density plantation of walnut and apples in addition to practicing

protected cultivation for vegetables. The two practices would provide the best means to raise the farmer's livelihood and income. Further, he suggested the farmers to focus on area-specific crops for Horticulture-based self employment generation.

The MLA also listened to the grievances of the

inhabitants of Block Mounгри and issued necessary instructions to Jal Shakti Department, PDD, PWD, PMGSY, Education, Rural Development Department, Revenue etc, for their time bound redressal. He also directed the departments to work with utmost zeal for the welfare of inhabitants of remote areas.

Later, the MLA distributed seed kits, as well as power tillers among the eligible farmers. He also inspected the stalls set up by various departments.

Among others, Chief Agriculture Officer, Tehsildar Mounгри, District Horticulture Officer, Sub divisional Agriculture Officer, Block Development Officer and other officers and officials of concerned departments participated in the camp.