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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:
 • Increase and continuous fever above 102°C
 • Persistent vomiting
 • A sharp rise in temperature
 • Disorientation
 • Bleeding from gums or nose, blood in stool
 • Redness on the skin
 If you have any of these symptoms, go to the nearest medical center IMMEDIATELY.

JINDRAH IMAGES

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CM Omar vows to keep governance free from political affiliations



JI NEWS SERVICE
SAMBA, DECEMBER 16

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today reiterated his government's commitment to unbiased governance, emphasizing that decisions would not be influenced by political affiliations or party lines.

He urged officers to address public issues brought forth by elected representatives with seriousness and urgency. Chairing a district review meeting at the Conference Hall in Samba, the Chief Minister was accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, Min-

isters Sakeena Itoo, Javed Ahmad Rana, Javid Ahmad Dar, and Satish Sharma. The meeting was also attended by District Development Council chairperson Samba, Members of Legislative Assembly SS Slathia (Samba), Chander Prakash Ganga (Vijaypur), and Devinder

Kumar Manyal (Ramgarh). Besides, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary to the CM Dheeraj Gupta, administrative secretaries, departmental heads, and other senior officers. Highlighting the importance of responsive

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Chila-i-Kalan to commence with light snowfall over higher reaches

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 16

As the 40-day harshest winter period is all set to commence by this weekend, the weatherman here has forecasted a light snow over higher reaches on the occasion. However, there is no forecast of any major wet spell till the next 10 days.

According to the news agency, the cold wave continued to tighten its grip across Kashmir amidst the persistent dry spell at the majority of places.

As per the details, Srinagar, the summer capital of J&K, witnessed a low of minus 3.4 degree Celsius while Gulmarg, a famous ski-resort, recorded a low of minus 4.0 degree Celsius.

In Pahalgam, the mercury settled at minus 5.0 degree Celsius while in Qazigund, a gateway of



Kashmir, it settled at minus 4.0 degree Celsius. North Kashmir's Kupwar recorded a low of minus 4.2 degree Celsius while Kokernag in South Kashmir recorded a minimum temperature of 3.9 degree Celsius. Furthermore, the Meteorological

department has predicted persistent cold wave conditions at isolated to scattered places.

For the next four days till December 20, the Director MeT, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad has predicted generally dry and cloudy

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Commissioner Railway inspects key rail link

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 16

Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) on Monday conducted a crucial inspection of the railway track connecting Reasi to Banihal on Monday, raising hopes of rail service to the Kashmir Valley commencing in January 2025.

The inspection is a significant milestone in the completion of the Katra-Banihal rail link, which forms part of the ambitious Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link

(USBRL) project.

As per the news agency CRS Dinesh Chand Deswal began his day at Gram Railway Station in Reasi after arriving by road from Katra. Boarding a railway engine, he traveled to Banihal, reviewing the track's preparedness and infrastructure. After returning to Sangaldan in the afternoon, he proceeded to Kodi in the evening. His inspection will continue on December 17, when he will travel from Kodi to Katra via trolley to examine the cable bridge

constructed over Anji Khad, another engineering marvel of the project.

A highlight of the rail link is the train's passage over the Chenab Bridge, the world's tallest railway bridge, which towers at 359 meters—higher than the Eiffel Tower. Constructed at a cost of Rs 1,486 crore, the bridge used 30,000 metric tons of steel and was built to withstand wind speeds of up to 260 kilometers per hour. The Chenab Bridge has already become a

symbol of engineering excellence in India.

The inspection follows a tweet from Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, who hinted that rail service to Kashmir could commence in January. Sources indicate that CRS Deswal will revisit the Katra-Banihal rail link in the first week of January for a final inspection, solidifying hopes of its timely launch.

Earlier this year, the Katra-Banihal section witnessed its first trial run in June.

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Ties with Sri Lanka will keep getting stronger: PM Modi after meeting with President Dissanayake

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that ties between India and Sri Lanka will keep getting stronger and added that the India visit of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake will add great momentum to the bilateral friendship.

In posts on X, the PM said: "India-Sri Lanka ties will keep getting stronger!



"It was indeed wonderful meeting you, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake. Your visit to India is going to add great momentum to the India-Sri Lanka

friendship!"

He said the talks with the visiting Sri Lankan president "covered topics such as trade, investment, connectivity and energy. Our nations also look forward to collaborating in sectors such as housing, agriculture, dairy and fisheries."

The PM was replying to a post on X by Sri Lankan President Dissanayake, in which he thanked PM Modi for helping

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LG attends Satya Deo Singh memorial event in UP

JI NEWS SERVICE
UTTAR PRADESH, DEC 16

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today felicitated and interacted with the Youth during Pratibha Samman Samaroh at Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Degree College, Gonda, Uttar Pradesh. The event was organized to commemorate the death anniversary of former Member of Parliament and senior BJP Leader Shri Satya Deo Singh.

At the memorial event, the Lieutenant Governor paid homage to Shri Satya Deo Singh and recalled his dedicated service to the nation and commitment to the public good.

"Satya Deo Singh was a widely respected leader who distinguished himself in various capacities in a public career spanning



more than four decades. He understood the needs of the future and the challenges India was facing and remained committed to provide solutions by ensuring social equality and equal access to opportunity for all," the Lieuten-

ant Governor said.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor highlighted the changes taking place in higher education sector, under the guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri

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J&K has eight identified polluted river stretches: Centre

AGENCIES
JAMMU, DEC 16

Jammu and Kashmir has eight polluted river stretches identified in 2022, according to Union Minister for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav.

The pollution in these river stretches is primarily attributed to the discharge of untreated or partially treated sewage from urban areas, industrial effluents, improper solid waste management, operational issues in sewage and effluent treatment plants, lack of dilution, and other non-point sources, the minister said.

Yadav further said that J&K has one Grossly Polluting Industry

(GPI), which is operational and complies with environmental standards. "GPIs are defined as industries discharging effluents into watercourses and either handling hazardous substances or generating a Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) load of 100 kg per day or more," he said.

The minister added, "Nationwide, there are 3,519 GPIs and 311 polluted river stretches across 279 rivers, based on monitoring conducted by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in 2019 and 2021. The CPCB continues to work with State Pollution Control Boards and Pollution Control Committees to monitor and address these issues."

India's heritage testament to its scientific prowess: Jitendra Singh

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh on Monday described India's heritage as a treasure trove of knowledge with nearly five million ancient manuscripts, palm-leaf inscriptions and thousands of monuments that are a testament to its scientific prowess, architecture and innovation.

He said the fusion of traditional knowledge with modern technology could give India an advantage over others.

Speaking at the celebration of five years of the Science and Heritage Research Initiative (SHRI), Singh underscored the transformative potential of blending

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Three DDC seats vacant in J&K as members elected as MLAs

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DEC 16

Three District Development Council (DDC) seats in Jammu and Kashmir remain vacant after their members were elected as Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

As per the details available with the news agency, the three DDC members who were elected as MLAs include Waheed Ur Rehman Para, who was elected as the DDC member from Pulwama-I but was not allowed to take oath as a DDC member; Irfan Hafiz Lone, who was elected as the DDC member from Sangrama; and Mehraj Malik, who was elected as the DDC member from Kahara.

Waheed Ur Rehman Para won the assembly elections from Pulwama, Lone won from the Wagoora-Kreeri constituency, and Mehraj Malik won from the Doda assembly segment.

It has been around two months since the assembly election results were announced, but the authorities have yet to declare by-polls for these three seats.

The DDC elections were introduced as part of the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Raj Act, 1989, which was amended by the Government of India to establish a three-tier governance system in the Union Territory (UT).

The first-ever DDC elections in J&K were held in November-December 2020 in eight phases. These elections were historic as they marked the first significant electoral exercise in the UT after the reorganization of J&K into two separate UTs—J&K and Ladakh—in August 2019.

The DDCs replaced the District Development Boards, empowering elected representatives to

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Jammu based Tiger Division celebrates 53 glorious years of India victory over Pakistan

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DEC 16

The Jammu based Tiger Division of Indian Army on Monday celebrated 53 glorious years of India's victory over Pakistan on the occasion of 'Vijay Diwas' at Balidan Stambh war memorial here.

As per the official communique, the event was conducted to commemorate the supreme sacrifice made by the gallant soldiers during India-Pakistan war of 1971 during which Indian armed forces thwarted Pakistan Army's nefarious design by defeating Pakistan in only thirteen days to end the war on December 16, 1971.

To commemorate the event, Deputy General Officer Commanding (Dy GOC), Tiger Division laid wreath at 'Eternal Flame' of the memorial to pay tribute to the fallen



heroes with ceremonial guard of honour in presence of other ranks of the Tiger Division.

Balidan Stambh depicts 'Tower of Sacrifice' and was constructed to commemorate the supreme sacrifice of war heroes in service of the

nation.

The monument is the country's tallest war memorial with the tower height of 60 meters.

In addition to the tower of sacrifice, the memorial comprises

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Over 5 Kg of heroin seized near LoC in Rajouri; 5 held

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI/JAMMU, DEC 16

Five alleged drug peddlers with more than five kilograms of heroin in their possession near the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district, police said on Monday.

The seizure of heroin, worth crores of rupees in the international market, from the Nowshera sector thwarted an attempt by the drug peddlers to smuggle the contraband from across the border, they said.

Sajan Kumar, 25 and Subash Chander, 36, were

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Finance Deptt mourns demise of CAO, Namisha Dogra

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 16

The Finance Department and JAKFAS today convened a condolence meeting to mourn the tragic and untimely demise of Namisha Dogra, Chief Accounts Officer, JMRDA.

Director General, Accounts and Treasuries, Fayaz Ahmad Lone, expressed deepest shock and sorrow over the demise of CAO, Namisha. He extended his heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved family during these difficult times, offering support and strength in their hour of grief. He assured them that the entire department stands in solidarity with them, providing strength and comfort as they cope with this tragic loss.

Director General, Codes, Mahesh Das;



Director General, Budget, Mohammad Sultan Malik and other senior officers, who also attended the condolence meeting, conveyed their condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul. They remembered Namisha as a passionate officer, acknowledging her professionalism, warmth and commitment towards her duties.

President JAKFAS, Rashmi Deepika, offered heartfelt condolences with the bereaved family,

appreciating Namisha for her dedication, integrity and outstanding work throughout her career. She shared that Namisha following her ill health was shifted to Medanta hospital, where she unfortunately succumbed to her ailment on Saturday. Her untimely departure has left a void in the hearts of all who knew her.

Further, Chief Accounts officer, Iram Nazir, Srinagar Metropolitan Region Development Authority (SMRDA), who attended the meeting virtually, also

spoke in remembrance of Namisha. She shared cherished memories of working alongside her in the same department and fondly remembered Namisha as a dedicated and hardworking colleague who always went above and beyond in her professional role.

The condolence gathering included JAKFAS Executive Body members including VP (K) Rafiq Shah, VP (J) Rahul Mahajan and Director Finance(s), Joint Director(s), FA/CAOs, Deputy Directors, CAOs and Accounts officers, who came together to honor her memory and offering prayers for the departed soul. Director Accounts and Treasuries, Kashmir, Shaheeh Mohd Ashraf and several other officers attended the condolence meeting virtually from Srinagar.

DC Baramulla inaugurates newly established Snow Clearance Unit at Watergam Rafiabab

JINNEWS SERVICE
BARAMULLA, DECEMBER 16

In a significant effort aimed to ensure timely snow clearance and improve winter connectivity, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, today inaugurated the Snow Clearance Unit at Watergam, Rafiabab under the Mechanical and Hospital Division Baramulla.

This newly established unit will cater specifically to the entire Rafiabab area, ensuring swift snow clearance operations during the winter months.

During the inaugural ceremony, the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division Baramulla, briefed the DC about the availability of machinery and the operational readiness of the unit. He highlighted the deployment of essential equipment to effectively address snow



accumulation across the region and maintain road connectivity.

Speaking on the occasion, DC emphasized the importance of proactive measures for snow clearance to minimize disruptions during the winter season. He stressed the need for efficient coordination among departments to ensure uninterrupted mobility for residents and emergency services.

The establishment of this unit at Watergam

has been widely appreciated by the local residents, who see it as a crucial step towards addressing long-standing issues of snow clearance and winter accessibility. Meanwhile, local residents brought up the pressing demand for the desilting of Nalah Hamal, which passes through Watergam. The residents emphasized that desilting is essential to prevent waterlogging, flooding and improve the overall drainage system in the area.

Open Volleyball Tournament inaugurated at BHSS Ganderbal

JINNEWS SERVICE
GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 16

The Department of Youth Services and Sports (YSS) Ganderbal, in collaboration with the 115 Battalion CRPF, commenced an exhilarating Open Volleyball Tournament for boys today at Boys Higher Secondary School (BHSS) Ganderbal.

Eight teams representing various higher secondary schools from across the district are competing in this two-day event.

The tournament was formally inaugurated by the Commanding Officer of the 115 Battalion CRPF, DYSSO Ganderbal Sheikh Shafiq Iqbal, and Deputy CEO Ganderbal, Rumaisa Sangeen.

JKBOSE organises UT level Role Play and Folk Dance Competition

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 16

The Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) successfully organized UT level Role Play and Folk Dance Competition at the Seminar Hall of Government Higher Secondary School (Boys), Gandhinagar, Jammu. Conducted under the National Population Education Programme (NPEP) and Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) and funded by NCERT, the event brought together teams from ten districts of Jammu Division and ten districts from Kashmir division to showcase their creativity and cultural talent while addressing important themes such as health and well-being, personal safety, media literacy, substance abuse prevention, gender equality, and environmental conservation.

Out of the total merit

drawn at UT Level from divisional level competitions held at Srinagar and Jammu, GHSS Tikri, Udhampur excelled in Role play competition, PM Shri GHS Batote Ramban remained second whereas GHSS Rainawari Srinagar got third position. In Folk Dance and Drama category, GHSS Chairyai Udhampur secured the first position, GHSS Buddhi Kathua remained at second position whereas GHSS Gho Manhasa got the third prize. The winner teams were awarded cash prizes whereas all the participants were given certificates. The topper teams will participate at national level competitions to be held at Gwalior.

The event was inaugurated by Prof Parikshat Singh Manhas Chairman JKBOSE in presence



of Prof. Sudhir Singh, Director Academics and UT Project Coordinator (NPEP/AEP).

In his inaugural address upon the importance of creative platforms in fostering awareness and critical thinking among students. "Practice makes a man perfect. Positivity coupled with consistent practice of values certainly yields success. Dissemination of aware-

ness on prevalent evils is important in creating a progressive society and this programme is a creative step in this direction. By merging education with artistic expression, the Board continues to empower young minds to address pressing societal challenges with confidence and insight, shaping them into thoughtful and proactive citizens," he added.

Prof Sudhir Singh in his

address expressed satisfaction on the efficient conduct of competitions right from school to UT level. "This year we could successfully involve all the ten districts of Kashmir also after almost a decade; the outstanding enthusiasm and active participation is an indication of visible change," he added. Principal GHSS Shastri Nagar Jammu assured support in organising such programs in future.

Earlier the programme started with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp followed by welcome address by Dr. Yasir H. Sirwal, Deputy Director Academics-JD. He said such Programmes have good impact on the students which is reflected in their enthusiasm. The competition was evaluated by a panel of judges, including Ms.

Promila Manhas, Senior Lecturer, GGHS Sarore Raj Kumar, Instructor at Institute of Music and Fine Arts, University of Jammu; and Mr. Sheikh Mohammad Haneef, a celebrated theatre artist and playwright.

Chander Sharma, Academic Officer, expressed vote of thanks. Sugandh, Academic Officer, gracefully anchored the Programme.

Rajesh Singh Asstt Secretary, Mohd Jameel Asstt Secretary, JKBOSE Ashutosh Parashar Academic officer Ms Syed Kashif Hashmi Academic officer, Mr Jamil Ahmed Assistant Secretary CDR/SOS JD JKBOSE, other officials of Academic Division JKBOSE and staff of GHSS Gandhinagar were present on the occasion.

This competition highlighted JKBOSE's commitment to nurture creativity, cultural awareness, and social responsibility among students.

Transport Commissioner sets Jan 31 as deadline for installation of CCTV cameras in school buses



JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 16

Transport Commissioner, Vishesh Mahajan today held a meeting with representatives of school authorities regarding the safety audit of vehicles ferrying students. The aim of the move was to seek active participation and cooperation from the school authorities to ensure that vehicles used for ferrying students are fit and safe for transportation.

Referring to the Supreme Court's directions for school buses, the Transport Commissioner set 31st January as the deadline for the mandatory installation of CCTV in school buses so that every activity of the driver and assisting staff while driving is monitored. This will ensure the safety of stu-

dents round the clock. The school authorities were directed to ensure that all vehicles are fitted with functional speed governors, with the speed fixed at 40 km/h as per guidelines issued from time to time. They were informed that the vehicles will be seized on the spot if any school bus will be found violating safety norms while plying on roads, especially with regard to overloading and over speeding.

The authorities assured that all safety measures outlined in the Supreme Court guidelines are being followed to ensure the safety of children. They were further asked to restrict underage students from driving two-wheelers/ four-wheelers in and around school premises. Additionally, they were directed to hold

counseling sessions with the parents to warn about the consequences if their wards are not prohibited from underage driving.

The Transport Commissioner was informed that most schools have their own fleet of vehicles, but some private vehicles are also engaged by parents. Therefore, it is the duty of school authorities to ensure that these vehicles also comply with the mandatory guidelines, such as emergency exit doors, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, GPS trackers, CCTV cameras, the use of seat belts, fire detection alarm system etc.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Joint Transport Commissioner Vinay Samotra, Assistant Transport Commissioner, ARTO (HQ) Jammu, and school authorities.

DC inspects progress of National Highway construction work in Poonch



JINNEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 16

Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal conducted an inspection of the ongoing construction of the National Highway (NH-144A), a crucial initiative aimed at enhancing connectivity and promoting economic development in Poonch and its surrounding areas.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner toured several key sites, including Sukha Khata, Kankote, Nangali zone, Janyar, Dingla, and Chan-

dak, besides various bridges to take stock of the pace of work progress. He emphasized the importance of executing the project according to prescribed specifications and the highest engineering standards.

The Deputy Commissioner highlighted the significance of the highway project in facilitating smoother transportation, boosting local businesses, and providing residents with improved access to essential services. He noted that land acquisition for all related proj-

ects has been successfully completed, with compensation awards already issued to some affected landowners.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed the need for transparency and fairness in the compensation process, ensuring that genuine beneficiaries receive the support they deserve. His proactive approach reaffirms the administration's commitment to both infrastructure development and community welfare as the NH-144A project progresses.

Distt Admin Shopian organises one-day Seminar on Competitive Examinations for Aspirants

JINNEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 16

The District Administration Shopian today organised a day-long seminar on competitive examinations for the aspirants titled 'How to approach the Competitive examinations' at Government Degree College Shopian.

The District Administration under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar conducted the seminar for the aspirants to acquaint them with the basic know-how of competitive examinations.

The Officers discussed the various parameters of successful preparations for the competitive examinations including the Civil Services.

JKAS Officers including ACR, Shakoor Ahmad

Dar; DPO, Arshi Rasool; Tehsildar, Anjum Khan; STO, Sarfaraz Ahmad; BDOs, Shakeel Ahmad & Gulzar Bin Rehman; DSWO, Ibrar Ahmad and CDPO, Saddam Hussain,

on the occasion shared insights on exam/ preparation strategies for the aspirants.

Overview of the Civil Services examinations, Polity, Geography, Environmental Science, Science and Technology,

Arts and History, Current affairs, economy etc were dealt with in detail by officers for the benefit of aspirants.

DC appreciated the response of the aspirants for coming in good numbers to attend the seminar despite the bone chilling cold.

He expressed hope that the seminar becomes a stepping stone to their success. Exhibition of hard work, proper exam strategy, perseverance and focus are key to the success for cracking the competitive examination, said Shahid while alluring them to channelise their energies towards pursuing their career goals.

He impressed upon them to make use of the facilities available at the Reading rooms to them for their career development.

ADDC Shopian, Dr.Nasir Ahmad Lone urged the students to work hard and make use of valuable insights being shared during the day-long seminar.

Among the attendees were those aspirants who had applied for the free coaching classes being started from tomorrow at Higher Secondary School Shopian, steered by District Administration Shopian.

DC Kupwara chairs RTA meeting

JINNEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, DECEMBER 16

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan today convened a meeting of the Regional Transport Authority (RTA) to review applications for different route permits across the district.

The meeting focused on discussing various matters related to public transport in the district and sanctioning of route permits.

During the session, the DC, who also serves as the chairman of the RTA, along with other members, meticulously reviewed applications for road permits. A total of 42 applications which include 11 Mumkin cases were received for issuance of Letter of Authority (LA) to get District

Permits and local route permits.

All the 42 applications which pertained to 18 Magic cabs and 24 Mini Busses were approved by the RTA after thorough review and discussion.

It was informed in the meeting that this extra fleet of mini busses and cabs added in the district will provide a smooth and comfortable travelling experience to the people especially living in far flung areas of the district.

On the occasion, the DC urged the Traffic Department to ensure proper traffic regulation and take necessary action against violators, underscoring the commitment to maintaining order on the roads.

The meeting was attended by ASP Kupwara, Dy. SP Handwara and ARTO Kupwara.

DC reviews implementation of PMJVK Scheme in Kishtwar

JI NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 16

District Development Commissioner (DDC) Kishtwar Rajesh Kumar Shavan today reviewed the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) scheme in the district here at a meeting of District Level Committee (DLC).

The meeting focused on the initiatives aimed at the socio-economic development of minority communities. Directives were issued to ensure the timely initiation and effective implementation of key projects.

The DC reviewed the status of the projects taken up under the PMJVK scheme (education department), including the construction of school buildings such as GHS Lopara (Marwah), GHS Tipri (Drabshalla), GHS Sranwa (Kishtwar),



GMS Gulabgarh (Paddar), GMS Bonda (Inderwal), GMS Hindgam (Inderwal) and GHSS Mughal Maidan (Inderwal).

He directed the concerned officials to proceed with the construction of one additional room for the Health and Wellness Centre at Sigdi Bhata, the assessment of the old block and multipurpose hall at GHSS Kishtwar, and

the remodeling of NTPHC Inderwal.

The meeting was attended by PO ICDS Rishi Kumar Sharma; CPO Shahnawaz Bali; DSWO Zubair Ahmed; CEO Kishtwar Javed Ahmed Kitchloo, LDM Kishtwar, BMO Chatroo, along with representatives from ITI Kishtwar, NGOs, and other staff from the concerned departments.

Principal GMC Srinagar inspects PHC Khag, Govt Unani Medical College Gbl

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 14

Principal and Dean Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar, Prof. (Dr.) Iffat Hassan Shah, Monday conducted inspection visit to Primary Health Centre (PHC) Khag and the Government Unani Medical College Nawab Bagh, Ganderbal.

Dr. Iffat was accompanied by Mohammad Ashraf Hakak, Administrator Associated Hospitals GMC Srinagar; HOD SPM, Dr. Salim Khan, Block Medical Officers and Assistant Director Planning.

The inspection visit to the PHC in Khag aimed to assess the facilities, services, and overall functioning of the health centre.

The inspection focused on infrastructure, staff availability, patient care, and essential supplies. Principal visited vari-



ous sections of the newly constructed building and also inspected the site for construction of the Hostel Block. She also visited MHRU and enquired about its working.

During the visit to the Government Unani Medi-

cal College, Dr. Iffat Hassan conducted an in-depth inspection to assess the college's facilities, Academic activities, services and overall operational standards. The inspection covered critical areas such as infrastructure,

academic progress, staff and faculty availability, patient care, and essential resources.

Dr. Iffat engaged with students and faculty members, listening to their concerns and suggestions. She assured them that all necessary resources and facilities would be provided and urged the college administration to create a dynamic and supportive environment for students.

She emphasized the importance of dedicated efforts from all staff members, encouraging them to work with enthusiasm and focus on improving patient care and overall institutional excellence.

These inspection visits reflect the administration's commitment to strengthening healthcare services in rural areas and enhancing the standards of medical education.

Deputy Commissioner reviews functioning of GMC, interacts with patients from Badhaal village

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, DECEMBER 16

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, today visited Government Medical College (GMC) Rajouri to interact with patients and review the hospital's functioning.

The visit came in the wake of a concerning situation in Badhaal village, where seven individuals recently lost their lives due to an unidentified illness. Several other affected individuals were admitted to GMC Rajouri, and all are showing encouraging signs of recovery.

During his interaction with the patients from Badhaal, DC Abhishek Sharma assured them of all possible assistance from the district administration. He expressed his commitment to ensuring the best possible medical care for those admitted and extended support to the affected families.

Deputy Commissioner also interacted with other patients at the hospital and conducted a comprehensive review of the functioning of GMC Rajouri. He emphasized the importance of maintaining high standards of healthcare and urged the hospital authorities to prioritize the well-being of all patients.

Reassuring the public, DC Rajouri appealed to the general public and media not to create panic until the final reports of food and water samples, sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL), are received. He stressed the need for cooperation and patience during this time.

The DC was accompanied by Principal GMC Rajouri, Dr. A.S. Bhatia, and senior doctors of the hospital during the visit. The team briefed the DC on the ongoing treatment of patients and the steps being taken to manage the situation.

DC Srinagar finalizes action plan for implementation of Mission YUVA

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 16

In order to finalize the action plan for successful implementation of Mission Yuva Udhayami Vikas Abhiyan in the district, a meeting was convened under the Chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat here at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex.

At the outset, the DC held a detailed discussion focused on the effective execution of the mission, strategies to identify, deployment and training of manpower, and ensuring effective coordination and collaboration among the departments and other stakeholders. During the meeting, key action points, roles of line departments were outlined to ensure the Mission's objectives are met effectively and efficiently.

On the occasion, the DC highlighted the objectives of the Mission Yuva Udhayami Vikas Abhiyan launched by the Government for creating new micro enterprises, expanding existing ones



and collectives, and promoting new enterprises based on innovative ideas in J&K with a view to create sustainable employment opportunities.

He added that the strategy is to build an ecosystem for developing entrepreneurial culture, facilitate capacity building, and provide opportunities for access to finance and capital.

The DC stressed the Officers to give focused attention on efficient planning for conducting the baseline survey of existing and potential entrepreneurs in the district. He emphasized on proper monitoring of the process of survey by the concerned Officers at their respective level and sensitizing their staff deployed

regarding the implementation of Mission YUVA.

He said the initiative is being monitored at a high level and urged all stakeholders to work in mission mode for its successful implementation.

The DC underlined that the survey will serve as a foundation for planning and implementing future development projects. He observed that Training of staff is pivotal for successful survey, decision-making and effective execution of the Mission.

He also asked for setting up a robust Control Room at District level for effective management and monitoring of Baseline Survey and successful implementation of the Mission YUVA. The DC emphasized

the intensified awareness campaign regarding the Mission YUVA for which he directed the constitution of a District Level Publicity team for mass scale public awareness.

Dr Bilal urged the concerned to ensure productive capacity building training sessions focused on the strategic framework of Project YUVA, implementation modalities, and the roles and responsibilities of Officers/ Officials involved, besides encouraging youth to take full advantage of the government support available under Mission YUVA and work towards building sustainable and scalable enterprises.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Syed Ahmad Kataria, Joint Commissioner SMC, Chief Planning Officer, Programme Officer, ICDS, District Statistics and Evaluation Officer, Assistant Commissioner Development, District Social Welfare Officer, District Informatics Officer, and Officers from DE&CCC, Rural Development and other line Departments were present in the meeting.

DDC Chairperson Rajouri reviews approval of Projects under PMJVKY

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, DECEMBER 16

A meeting of the district-level committee for the implementation & approval of projects under the Prime Minister Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVKY) was held today at Dak Bungalow, Rajouri. The meeting was chaired by Advocate Naseem Liaqat, Chairperson of the District Development Council (DDC).

Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma, along with other senior officers attended the meeting.

The Chairperson reviewed the nature of works proposed by various departments under PMJVKY and emphasized the significance of the scheme in addressing developmental gaps in the district.

DC Abhishek Sharma directed the stakeholder departments to finalize and submit detailed project proposals within three days, duly approved by block-level committees. He underlined the importance of adhering to PMJVKY guidelines to ensure comprehensive coverage of priority areas.*



Issuing directives, the Committee asked the health Department to include projects for CHCs, PHCs, diagnostic labs, MRI facilities, ambulances for blood collection, while the Education Department was asked to incorporate laboratories, libraries, and other essential infrastructure for schools in their plan.

"The ITI/Skill Development shall include Hunar Haats and skill development centers to promote local talent and employment & proposals for establishment of women welfare hostels and boys and girls hostels" the meeting decided.

The Power Development Department (PDD) was asked to propose installation of solar panels at major shrines and government institutions in their plan, while Public Health Engineering (PHE)

shall address coverage of uncovered urban areas in the district.

Further, the Youth and Sports Department was asked to propose the construction of stadiums and mini-stadiums.

Highlighting the immense potential of PMJVKY, the DDC Chairperson called for a coordinated effort from all departments to include comprehensive projects that align with the scheme's objectives, ensuring impactful developmental outcomes in Rajouri.

The meeting was attended by ADDC Dr. Raj Kumar Thapa, Principal GMC Dr. A.S. Bhatia, CEO Bishamber Dass, LDM, District AYUSH Officer, Amardeep Singh and Rafiq Mir, representatives of the Rotary Club, and other district and sectoral officers.

Dy CM inspects Thandi Khui Bus terminal; asks for speedy, quality completion



JI NEWS SERVICE
SAMBA, DECEMBER 16

Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today inspected the ongoing work on the bus terminal at Thandi Khui in Samba district.

Being constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 18.53 crore by the Public Works department, the terminal has a capacity of accom-

modation 100 buses. It would cater to the inter district, intra district buses coming from other states as well as providing a centre place to the commuters travelling to different areas of Jammu and Kashmir. While interacting with the officials, the Deputy Chief Minister directed for speedy completion of the said project while strictly adhering to

the set quality parameters. He said the ambitious project is of vital importance for connectivity of Samba and other districts of Jammu division. "Officers should ensure early completion of the bus terminal and lacuna, if any, should be redressed within the shortest possible time, so that public gets benefitted from this initiative", he maintained.

Surplus quantity of firewood placed at Sale Depots across Valley



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 16

To satiate the demand for firewood, the Forest Department has placed surplus quantities of firewood at all sale depots across the Valley.

This was stated by the Chief Conservator of Forests, Kashmir in a meeting chaired by Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidhuri. The Div Com on Monday convened an urgent meeting to assess the availability of firewood in Valley to fetch the demand.

Addressing the meeting, Div Com enjoined on Additional Deputy Commissioners & District Officers of Forest Department

to promptly address the demand for firewood in view of the current winter season.

He directed all ADCs to designate nodal officers for effective coordination vis-a-vis meeting the firewood needs within their respective districts. It was given-out that 95% of the demand for firewood is raised by the masjid committees from Srinagar and urban areas of other districts besides Gurdwara Committees.

CF informed that the department has raised the target of firewood consumption to 80 thousand quintals for this year from 60 thousand quintals in previous year.

He said that the department has already deposited 63 thousand quintals of firewood in sale depots till date, of which 44 thousand quintals have been already distributed. The sale depots have also been increased from thirteen during last year to thirty for the current year.

In response to the concern raised by some Hon'ble MLAs regarding deficiency of firewood in their constituencies, Div Com urged concerned officers to resolve the issue without delay.

However, it was given that a surplus quantity of firewood has already been allocated to sale depots of those specific areas.

Pathseekers Commemorates Vijay Diwas with Patriotic Fervor

JI NEWS SERVICE
SAMBA, DEC 16

Pathseekers International School (Ramgarh) observed Vijay Diwas on December 16, 2024, to honor India's historic victory in the 1971 Indo-Pak war. This day marked the surrender of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers to the Indian forces, leading to the creation of Bangladesh.

The students actively participated in various patriotic activities, including heartfelt songs, expressive dances, and tributes to the brave soldiers and martyrs who made the ultimate sacrifice for the nation's freedom and security.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman of Pathseekers Group, SSP (Retd.) Bhupinder Singh, addressed the students and emphasized the significance of the day. He remarked, "It is because of our brave soldiers and martyrs that we all are living safely. Their sacrifices will always inspire



us to uphold the values of courage, patriotism, and dedication."

Principal Mrs. Manpreet Kaur lauded her team for organizing an informative and inspiring special assembly for the students. She said, "Such events instill a sense of respect and pride in our students for our armed forces and their unparalleled contributions to the nation."

The event concluded with a collective pledge by students and staff to honor and remember the sacrifices of India's war heroes, ensuring their legacy continues to inspire generations to come.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

CM Omar vows...

governance, the Chief Minister stated, "I urge all of you and your officers to address the public issues raised by MLAs with seriousness and urgency. They are elected representatives of the people, and it is natural for people to expect solutions through them. As I have always maintained, this government—or any government—should not make decisions based on the basis of political affiliations. We must prioritize whether a project holds public utility or a public issue benefits the people. If it does, it must be processed and dealt with without delay."

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah acknowledged the challenges faced by the administration this year, citing two major elections as key reasons for delayed developmental activities.

He remarked, "The Parliament elections stretched over a long period, and the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct brought work to a halt. Even in some areas, where the work season coincided with the elections, progress was further delayed."

Addressing the district-specific concerns, he urged the administration to expedite developmental activities, stating, "Accelerate the pace of work as much as possible, ensuring it is executed effectively at the ground level. Efforts must focus on completing the work satisfactorily."

He also stressed the importance of timely submission of Utilization Certificates (UCs) for funds to be allocated by the central government. He said, "When we approach the central government repeatedly—whether to discuss with a minister or secure funds for Jammu and Kashmir—the common complaint is that UCs are not submitted on time. Prompt submission of UCs will ensure continuity of financial support and effective resource utilization."

Speaking on governance, CM Omar Abdullah noted the impact of the return of MLAs after 2018.

"With the return of MLAs, public expectations and pressures have significantly increased. This requires a coordinated effort to address the people's demands effectively."

Chief Minister took note of key issues raised during the meeting such as progress in respect of industrial estates, installation of smart meters. He directed immediate review and resolution of issues flagged by MLAs and concerns raised by MLAs to be verified.

Calling drug addiction a growing menace over the past decade, Chief Minister Abdullah emphasized coordinated efforts to curb its impact.

He remarked, "Despite securing international borders, the problem persists due to inflow from other areas."

Addressing this issue at its source is critical for our state."

The Chief Minister assured action, stating that the Dy CM has already directed the DC and officers to address the issue promptly.

The Chief Minister also addressed critical infrastructure concerns, including delays in the Katra-Amritsar-Delhi Expressway project.

He urged officials to resolve land acquisition and other bottlenecks to keep the project on track. Touching on staffing issues, he expressed concern over vacancies in hospitals and schools due to the practice of staff attachments.

He directed officers to provide details of such cases so that corrective measures can be taken to fill posts in rural areas.

The Chief Minister emphasized the importance of addressing public grievances raised by DDC members, MLAs, and civil society during the public outreach programme.

Other issues raised included drinking water supply, sanitation, regularization of daily wagers, upgradation of schools, establishment of colleges in remote areas, industrial policy, and shortage of staff in hospitals and schools.

Earlier, Deputy Commissioner Samba, Rajesh Sharma, presented a detailed profile of the district, outlining targets and achievements across various departments, including Jal Shakti (PHE), Public Works (R&B), Power Development, Education, Health, Agriculture, and Social Welfare.

The Chief Minister also e-inaugurated three key projects and laid the e-foundation stone for another transformative initiative. These projects, designed to enhance public welfare and boost the region's development, were virtually dedicated to the people.

Following the review meeting, the Chief Minister conducted a redressal camp, where local residents, industrial representatives, and delegations from far-flung areas submitted grievances and demands.

The Chief Minister assured the people that their genuine concerns would be resolved promptly. While concluding, chief minister Omar Abdullah praised the overall performance of the district despite challenges, expressing confidence in continued cooperation and progress.

He encouraged MLAs and stakeholders to submit priority projects in writing for inclusion in upcoming budget proposals, ensuring better planning and execution in the next fiscal year.

Chila-i-Kalan to commence...

weather conditions. However, on December 21 when the 40-day harshest winter period commences, the MeT Director has said that generally cloudy weather is expected with the possibility of light snow over higher reaches towards late evening or night of 21st to 22nd early morning & dry weather thereafter.

From December 23 to December 26, he said that the weather would remain generally dry.

Meanwhile, in its advisory, the MeT has said that in view of fresh snowfall, the sub-freezing temperature & icy conditions over roads of important passes and higher reaches, the tourists, travellers and transporters are advised to follow administration and traffic advisory—(KNO)

Commissioner Railway...

A train carrying project employees and railway officials traveled from Sangaldan to Reasi, Upon its arrival

at Reasi Railway Station, locals gathered to celebrate, chanting "Bharat Mata ki Jai" in anticipation—(KNO)

Ties with Sri Lanka...

his country during the economic crisis. "It is a privilege to visit India on my first overseas trip as President and I am grateful to PM @narendramodi for supporting Sri Lanka during the economic crisis and for aiding debt restructuring.

"We discussed trade, defence, energy, BRICS, UNCLCS, and stopping illegal fishing during our meeting today. I invited PM Modi to visit Sri Lanka and assured India that Sri Lanka's territory would not be used against India's security interests."

Earlier, in his media statement after talks with the Sri Lankan President, PM Modi said the two sides will work on building electricity grid connectivity and multi-product petroleum pipeline between their nations.

He also said that they had discussed reconciliation and reconstruction in Sri Lanka and expressed hope that the Sri Lankan government will fulfil the aspirations of the Tamil people.

PM Modi said that President Dissanayake's state visit has "imparted new pace and energy to the bilateral ties".

"We have adopted a futuristic vision for our relations. We have focused on investment-led growth and connectivity in our economic partnership, and decided that physical, digital and energy connectivity will be the key foundations of our partnership."

"We will work on building electricity grid connectivity and multi product petroleum pipeline between our two nations. We will advance the Sampur solar power project and alongside we will arrange for the LNG supply for Sri Lanka's power plants," the PM said.

He said the two sides will also try and conclude negotiations on the free trade agreement as soon as possible.

"Till now USD5 billion Lines of Credit and grant assistance have been provided to Sri Lanka. We have provided development assistance in every of Sri Lanka's 25 districts. Our projects are always based on the developmental priorities of our partner countries," the PM said.

"To take forward our development partnership, we have decided to provide grant assistance for the signalling system of the Maho-Anuradhapura railway line and the Kankesanthurai port redevelopment."

"For our education partnership in Jaffna and northern districts 200 college students will be provided scholarships. For the next five years 1,500 Sri Lankan civil servants will be provided training in India."

"Alongwith housing, renewable energy and infrastructure, India will provide assistance for Sri Lanka's agriculture, fisheries and dairy sector. India will partner in Sri Lanka's unique digital identity."

"We both are in agreement that our security needs are joined to each other. We have decided to speed up conclusion of our defence agreement. We are also in agreement for cooperation in the field of hydrography. We are in agreement that the Colombo Security Conclave is a very important platform for regional peace and security," he said.

Following the talks, the two sides signed some outcomes:

Financial assistance scheme to 100 new students each annually from University of Jaffna and Eastern University until the end of academic courses of the beneficiaries; Grant assistance of USD 14.9 million for the signaling project in Maho-Anuradhapura section; Protocol Amending the Agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Government of India for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income; and MoU between National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), Government of India and Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) on Training and Capacity Building Programme for Civil Servants of Sri Lanka.

Later, the Sri Lankan President posted on his meeting with VP Jagdeep Dhankhar and Health Minister JP Nadda.

"Had a productive meeting with @VPIndia Jagdeep Dhankhar today (16), where we discussed enhancing economic cooperation, agriculture, and digitalization. Appreciate his congratulations on my electoral victory. Later, I also met with Indian Health Minister @JPNadda to further strengthen ties."

The Vice President posted that the talks with the Sri Lankan President "centred around further strengthening the thriving, multi-faceted partnership between India and Sri Lanka, built upon the firm foundations of kinship, history and culture."

The MEA spokesperson posted: "A new milestone in the India-Sri Lanka partnership. "Wide-ranging discussions held between the delegations of India and Sri Lanka led by PM @narendramodi and President @anuradisnayake respectively.

"Both sides reviewed the comprehensive India-Sri Lanka partnership and agreed on a roadmap to deepen ties for the mutual benefit of the two countries as well as the region."

LG attends Satya...

Narendra Modi, in the past few years. He said the visionary National Education Policy is laying a strong foundation for our future growth. Focus on knowledge connectivity, skilling, entrepreneurship and sustained growth has made India world's new growth engine, he added.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised the crucial role of educational institutions in capacity building of the future workforce and realizing the vision of Developed India.

He observed that the educational institutions are driving the nation's progress and they should promote learning beyond the classroom.

National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes on capacity building to adjust to continuously changing scenarios. It has given the college campus the courage to make new discoveries, new inventions. We need to make necessary reforms, aligned with NEP 2020, to develop a conducive environment where students acquire skills and values to deal with the challenges of the real world, the Lieutenant Governor added.

"We are the fastest growing economy today but our challenge is to make sure India's share of world GDP is

DDC Chairman, DC discuss arrangements for Baderwah Winter Festival

J1 NEWS SERVICE
DODA, DECEMBER 16

To set ball rolling for promotion of winter tourism, District Development Council (DDC) Chairman Dhananter Singh Kotwal and Deputy Commissioner (DC) Harvinder Singh today discussed the preparations for the Winter Festival proposed to be held in Baderwah Valley here at a crucial meeting attended by representatives from the Hotel Association, Tourism Associations and other stakeholders.



The discussions centered on a range of activities and events that will be held during the festival to

attract tourists. Additionally, attention was given to improving infrastructure, ensuring the safety of visitors, and making the festival a memorable experience for the visitors.

The DDC Chairman and the DC Doda expressed their commitment to making the Winter Festival a grand success, emphasizing the importance of collaboration among government authorities, local businesses and tourism bodies to create a thriving tourism ecosystem in Doda.

more than a quarter by 2047," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also gave his valuable suggestions on promoting innovation, invention and research and encouraging inter-disciplinary education in the educational institutions.

Every higher educational institution should focus on four important aspects - Access, Equity, Quality and Outcome, and nurture scientific-thinking, curiosity and creativity among the students. Youth should be prepared for moral leadership and also motivate others to work for the welfare of the society, he further added.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor felicitated individuals who excelled in diverse fields. He also inaugurated the Shastri Pavillion at Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Degree College and released a publication of Satya Saroj Foundation.

Ms Neha Sharma, President, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Degree College Managing Committee; Ms Varsha Singh, Vice President of the college's Managing Committee; members of Satya-Saroj Foundation, prominent citizens, faculty members and students of the college were present.

India's heritage testament...

India's ancient wisdom with contemporary scientific innovations.

He said the key initiatives under SHRI, such as non-invasive techniques for heritage preservation, digitalising the Ajanta caves and artefact restoration showcase how heritage and technology can coexist to pave the way for societal progress.

The minister highlighted the need to integrate scientific innovation with livelihood opportunities, particularly through traditional crafts and skills.

He also called for more collaboration between scientific institutions, startups, and private enterprises to create market-driven solutions for traditional knowledge systems.

"From creating start-ups around ancient crafts to developing AI-powered heritage conservation tools, India has the potential to lead in innovation that respects its cultural roots," Singh said.

He called for a renewed focus on aligning heritage with innovation, creating sustainable development opportunities, and positioning India as a leader in the global knowledge economy.

Three DDC seats...

formulate and execute development plans for their respective districts. The councils consist of 14 members per district, directly elected by the public, and are responsible for overseeing the execution of developmental projects and schemes.

A by-election for two DDC seats was held in 2023 after it was revealed that two previously elected candidates were not Indian citizens. The polls for two District Development Council (DDC) seats were declared "null and void" after it emerged that two women from Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), married to locals from the valley, had contested the elections.

The State Election Commission (SEC), in the exercise of the powers conferred under Section 36 of the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989, had declared the polling for the DDC constituencies of Drugmulla and Hajin (A) as void, cancelling the candidature of Soomia Sadaf and Shazia Aslam.

Jammu based Tiger...

of 52 memorial pillars with 7512 names of bravehearts and murals of nine Param Veer Chakra awardees and 27 ashok Chakras awardees.

The solemn day of December 16 is observed every year at Balidan Stambh with full zeal to mark the 'Vijay Diwas' celebrations of 1971 war in the befitting manner.

Over 5 Kg of heroin...

arrested with 5.3 kgs of heroin during a joint operation conducted by the Army and the police in the forward villages of Sher and Kaneti late Sunday, an officer said.

Senior Superintendent of Police (Rajouri) Gaurav Sikarwar said the seizure was made near Makri Bawani.

The peddlers were booked under sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, he said.

In another operation, he said two more drug peddlers - Vaneet Sayal and Sourav Kumar - were arrested with 11 grams of heroin in their possession during checking at Salani, he said.

Sikarwar said another peddler Mohd Yousuf was arrested, while his associate managed his escape during a check near Children's park in the town.

A total of 689 strips of tapentadol tablets (6890 tablets), 36 strips of pregabalin tablets (540 tablets) and six strips of tramadol tablets (60 tablets) were recovered from the peddler.

On Saturday, Border Security Force seized a Pakistani drone and nearly half-a-kilogram of high-grade narcotics along the international border in the Arnia sector of Jammu.

2nd session of POSHAN Project training for Anganwadi Workers commences in Reasi



J1 NEWS SERVICE
REASI, DECEMBER 16

The second session of the three-day training program for Anganwadi workers under the POSHAN Project commenced today here at the Government Polytechnic College, Reasi. The training, scheduled from December 16 to 18, was inaugurated by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Sukhdev Singh Samyal in the presence of District Program Officer (DPO) POSHAN Mohammad Anwar Bandy and CDPO Suninderjeet Kour.

ADDC Reasi Sukhdev Singh Samyal, while addressing the participants, emphasized the significance of the initiative in equipping Anganwadi

workers with the latest trends and techniques to enhance the effectiveness of the centers. As part of the program, curriculum books NAVchetna and Adharshilla were distributed among the Anganwadi workers, while a detailed orientation was provided to the Sanginis DPO Mohammad

Anwar Bandy also highlighted the importance of capacity building for Anganwadi workers, underscoring their crucial role in achieving the objectives of the POSHAN Abhiyaan. The training program aims to empower the participants with knowledge and skills essential for addressing nutritional and developmental needs at the grassroots level.

DC Shopian visits Aglar Industrial Estate, resolves illegal encroachments issue, public grievances



J1 NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 16

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar today visited the Aglar Industrial Estate to address pressing issues faced by the industries department and the local community due to the development of Industrial Estate in the area.

MLA Zainapora, Showkat Hussain Ganie was also present on the occasion.

During the visit, the DC met local members and interacted with them to understand their concerns and grievances.

Some of the key issues that were resolved on the occasion include removal of illegal encroachments.

The DC ordered immediate action to remove illegal encroachments from the government land and ensured that the industrial estate's land is used for its intended purpose.

The DC reviewed the progress of the development of the industrial estate and listened to the grievances of the local community and industrial unit holders, providing on-the-spot solutions to their problems.

He instructed for proper access of road connectivity to the locals through the estate and access to the local school and playground without compromising on the development of the estate.

The visit was a significant step towards resolving the long-standing issues faced by the industrial unit holders and the local community, and is expected to boost industrial growth and development.

The DC was accompanied by ADDC, Dr.Nasir Ahmad Lone, ACR, GM DIC, DIO Shopian, Tehsil Shopian and other officers and officials during the visit.

DDC reviews performance of Agriculture department in Poonch

JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 16

District Development Commissioner Poonch Vikas Kundal today reviewed the physical and financial progress under Agriculture production and farmers welfare schemes (UT and Centrally Sponsored Schemes) in the district here at a meeting held in the Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex.

At the outset, the DDC took a detailed review of establishment and new initiatives, working of Kisan Khadmit Ghars (KKGs), enrollment of farmers for DAKSH Kisan services, benefits extended under Holistic Agriculture Development Plan (HADP), coverage under PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, Kisan Credit Card (KCC), JK Comprehensive Agriculture and Allied Implementation Project (JKCAIP) and establishment of FPOs under Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME), among others.

The Chief Agriculture Officer (CAO) provided a detailed report on the achievement and advancements of these schemes including enhancing farm-



ers' income with diversification and new initiatives.

The DDC highlighted that young educated farmers must be motivated and guided to come forward and adopt agriculture and allied activities as income generating ventures. He also discussed the preparedness for the opening of Kisan Khidimat Ghars (KKGs) in the district. He said that KKG is a one stop facility for farmers to connect with everything related to agriculture and allied sectors. "This initiative will provide employment opportunities to youth and easy online access to government schemes" he added.

Highlighting the importance of increasing farmers' participation, the

DDC directed all officers to adopt a proactive approach, surpassing predefined targets to enroll as many farmers as possible. On the occasion, the DDC said that the government is committed to uplift the Agriculture and farmers welfare sector which generates livelihood opportunities for unemployed educated youth in Poonch district.

The meeting was attended by Chief Agriculture Officer Poonch, District agriculture officer (Extension) Area development Officer (Veg) Poonch, Assistant soil Conservation Officer, Assistant Soil Chemist, All Sub Divisional Agriculture Officer, All Agriculture Extension Officers and other concerned.

Road safety enforcement drive carried at Anantnag

JI NEWS SERVICE
ANANTNAG, DECEMBER 16

In a major step towards improving road safety, an extensive enforcement operation was today carried out in Anantnag.

The drive aimed at ensuring strict adherence to the Motor Vehicle Act, 1988, led to the issuance of numerous e-challans for various traffic violations.

The operation focused on key compliance areas including the verification of route permits, inspection for unauthorized vehicle modifications, and the installation and functioning of speed governors. These measures are crucial for regulating driving speeds



and minimizing the risk of accidents.

During the enforcement

drive, Rs 34,000 was collected on-site from violators. An additional Rs 74,000 is

expected to be collected as a result of the ongoing operation. The team also discovered several serious violations, resulting in the recommendation for the suspension of six driving licenses.

This decisive action reflects the department's commitment to upholding traffic regulations and promoting responsible driving behavior. The Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO) emphasized that such drives will continue as part of an ongoing effort to improve road safety and reduce traffic-related incidents. The department remains focused on ensuring the safety of all road users in the region.

DC Anantnag chairs DLAMC meeting

JI NEWS SERVICE
ANANTNAG, DECEMBER 16

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, SF. Hamid Monday chaired the District Level Aadhaar Monitoring Committee (DLAMC) meeting to review the progress of Aadhaar saturation in the district and address challenges related to enrollment and updates.

State Project Manager UIDAI J&K gave a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation highlighting the initiatives undertaken to streamline Aadhaar enrollment and updates. He detailed the organization of special Aadhaar camps in collaboration with the district administration and the establishment of enrollment facilities in hospitals to facilitate Aadhaar generation for newborns using verified birth certificates.

The use of QR code-verified date of birth certificates to prevent rejections during updates was also emphasized during the meeting.

The DC underscored the importance of Aadhaar as a document for accessing government services and benefits. He urged residents, particularly those who have not updated their Aadhaar in over a decade, to update their demographic details, biometrics, and supporting documents.

DLAMC Kulgam urges Aadhaar holders to update Biometrics, Demographic Data & Documents

JI NEWS SERVICE
KULGAM, DECEMBER 16

To review the progress of Aadhaar saturation in the district and to address challenges related to enrolment and updates, a meeting of the District Level Aadhaar Monitoring Committee (DLAMC) was today held at the DC Office, Kulgam.

The meeting, convened by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kulgam, Viqar Ahmed Giri, was attended by the District Statistics and Evaluation Officer, Tehsil-dars, Health, Education, Lead Bank Manager and other line departments.

State Project Manager UIDAI J&K gave a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation highlighting the initiatives undertaken to streamline Aadhaar enrolment and updates. He detailed the organization of special Aad-

haar camps in collaboration with the District Administration and the establishment of enrolment facilities in hospitals to facilitate Aadhaar generation for newborns using verified birth certificates.

The use of QR code-verified date of birth certificates to prevent rejections during updates was also emphasized during the meeting.

During the meeting, ADC underscored the importance of Aadhaar as a document for accessing government services and benefits and urged residents, particularly those

who have not updated their Aadhaar in over a decade, to update their demographic details, biometrics, and supporting documents. Parents were advised to ensure their children's Aadhaar biometric details are updated at the ages of 5 and 15 to keep their Aadhaar active.

All the departments were instructed to work in collaboration and intensify efforts to achieve 100% Aadhaar saturation in the district with special emphasis laid on updating Aadhaar for students to align with school records,

ensuring seamless application processes for national-level competitive exams.

Instructions were further issued to the concerned officials to enhance outreach programs and provide adequate resources to facilitate Aadhaar updates for residents.

Meanwhile, the ADC highlighted the importance of updated Aadhaar details in promoting ease of living, enhanced access to government services, and ensuring accurate authentication.

SHGs movement transforming rural economy, empowering women in J&K: Javid Dar

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 16

Minister for Agriculture Production and Rural Development Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, on Monday emphasized government's commitment towards empowering Self Help Groups (SHGs) through various initiatives.

Speaking as a chief guest at concluding ceremony of 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, the Minister highlighted the support and incentives being provided by the department and government to these groups. He outlined the role of SHGs in empowering women and transforming rural economy in the Union Territory.

Javid Dar expressed hope for achieving the targeted goals of economic and social upliftment. He emphasized on providing best market linkages to SHGs products for better economic prospects and business opportunities.

"Besides conducting exhibitions, seasonal SARAS melas, providing marketing platforms in districts via District Rural Haats and various other initiatives are being taken to enhance their business opportunities," maintained the Minister. He said that the sky is the limit for these skillful women who are successfully driving rural economy to new heights. He promised innovative measures to improve the functioning and outcomes of the institute, stating, "New ideas are



being incorporated, and I believe that over time, the institute will yield significant benefits for the participants and the community at large."

The Minister was accompanied by Secretary, Rural Development Department and Panchayati Raj (RDD&PR), Mohammad Aijaz Asad and Mission Director JKRLM, Dr Shubhra Sharma.

The event, organized by the JKRLM, celebrated the talent and craftsmanship of women Self-Help Group (SHG) members from across the Union Territory. The exhibition featured 40 vibrant stalls showcasing the rich art and craft of J&K.

Javid Dar also visited the different stalls which offered a mix of handicrafts, handlooms and culinary delights representing both the Jammu and Kashmir divisions. He also witnessed distinctive live demonstrations of traditional art forms, including pottery, grass handicrafts, Basholi art and crewel embroidery, performed by the artisans of different women SHGs. He interacted with the artisans and praised them for their skillful crafting as testament to the region's cul-

tural legacy.

The exhibition brought together an electric 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 Bhandarwah, 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 curtains and cushion covers from Kupwara and Budgam.

Among others the exhibition was attended by DG Rural Sanitation, Anoo Malhotra, Director Rural Development Department, Jammu, Mumtaz Ali, Director, Panchayati Raj, Sham Lal, Chief Operating Officer, Himayat, Rajneesh Gupta and others.

Mission Shakti Jammu conducts awareness session for female cadets at NCC Training Academy Nagrota

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 16

To promote digital Literacy and awareness regarding Government schemes and services among the female NCC cadets, Mission Shakti SANKLAP HEW Jammu (Social Welfare Department) organized a series of awareness sessions in collaboration with NCC Training Academy Nagrota. The initiative aims to equip cadets with essential digital skills, preparing them for the demands of the 21st century workforce and empowerment.

As part of this collaboration, Mission Shakti SANKLAP HEW Jammu provided expert resource person from Government women polytechnic college Jammu Er Deepika Sharma (lecturer computer dept) to impart digital education to the female cadets. The session covered topics such as computer basics, internet safety and digital tools for learning and professional skill development.

Further the session was continued by the official of Mission Shakti SANKALP HEW Jammu, who circulated the message of Gender sensitization and equality. Further they were also sensitized about the various women centric schemes and services. These interactive sessions not only imparted practical knowledge but also inspired cadets to explore the vast opportunities offered by digital technology and knowledge about various government schemes and services aimed to empower women.

DLTFC approves 20 cases under JK REGP

JI NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 16

The District Level Task Force Committee (DLTFC) today approved 20 loan proposals under the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Generation Programme (JKREGP) to support local entrepreneurs.

The approval was granted at a meeting chaired


by District Development Commissioner (DDC) Rajesh Kumar Shavan. The Scheme is being implemented by the J&K Khadi & Village Industries Board.

The Committee meticulously reviewed and scrutinized applications for seeking grant of loan for businesses, including provisional store, commercial vehicles and other business units, ultimately

approving 20 cases.

The total amount approved is around Rs 1.00 crore, with a subsidy provision of Rs 35 lakh to be provided to the beneficiaries.

The establishment of these units is expected to generate new employment opportunities, contributing significantly to the economic growth of the district.



UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
OFFICE THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) DIVISION GANDHI NAGAR JAMMU
e-mail : xenpwwdivgandhinagar@gmail.com

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Short e-NIT No. DGN/88 of 2024-25 Dated 13-12-2024

For and on behalf of the **Lieutenant Governor, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir** e-tenders are invited on **percentage basis** from approved and eligible Contractors registered with Union Territory of J&K, CPWD, Railways, MES and other State/Central Governments for each of the following works :-

S. No	Name of Work	Name of Division	Advertised Cost (₹ in Lacs)	Cost of document (in ₹)	Earnest Money (in ₹)	Time Allowed for complete-on	Time and date of opening of tender	Class of Contractor
1	Repair and renovation of Old Heritage Mosque at Bahu (Under M.H-4202-0272-115)	PWD (R&B) Division Gandhi Nagar	16.83	600	33660 (2% of the Advertised Cost)	01 Month	(1200 Hrs) on or after 21-12-2024	"A", "B" & "C" Class
2	Construction of Boundary Wall laying of Granite at Upper Beam of Gate & installation of Department name in brass alphabets at Office of District Soil Conservation Office Raika, Narwal Jammu (Under M.H-4202-0266-115)	PWD (R&B) Division Gandhi Nagar	3.88	600	7760 (2% of the Advertised Cost)	01 Month	(1200 Hrs) on or after 21-12-2024	"A", "B" "C" & "D" Class

Position of AAA :- Accorded by Directorate of Archives, Archaeology and Museums, Srinagar/Jammu vide order No. DOAAM-226 of 2024 dated 13-11-2024 for S.No. 1 and Director Soil & Water Conservation Department Jammu & Kashmir vide order No. DSC/AAA/CAMPA 2024-25/78-80 dated 06-11-2024 for S.No. 2.

Position of TS :- Sanctioned by this office order No. 119/PWD Div. Gandhi Nagar/2024-25 dated 10-12-2024 for S.No. 1 and order No. 118/PWD Div. Gandhi Nagar/2024-25 dated 10-12-2024.

Project Authority :- Directorate of Archives, Archaeology and Museums, Srinagar/Jammu for S.No. 1 and Director Soil & Water Conservation Department Jammu & Kashmir for S.No. 2.

Major Head of Account :- Under M.H-4202-0272-115 for S.No. 1 and M.H-4202-0266-115 for S.No. 2.

The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website <http://jktenders.gov.in> as per below schedule :

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	13-12-2024
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 13-12-2024 to 20-12-2024, 1800 Hrs
3	Date, Time and place of pre-bid meeting	16-12-2024 at 1300 Hrs. in the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Gandhi Nagar Jammu
4	Bid submission Start Date	13-12-2024
5	Bid Submission End Date	20-12-2024 upto 1800 Hrs
6	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	21-12-2024 on or after 1200 Hrs in the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Gandhi Nagar Jammu
7	Date & time of opening of Financial Bids (Online)	To be notified after technical bid evaluation is completed

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of e-challan through Treasury indicating Treasury Voucher No. & date, e-NIT No. and name of work duly crediting to 0059 (Revenue) favoring Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Gandhi Nagar Jammu and upload the same i.e treasury challan/receipt, Earnest money/Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Gandhi Nagar Jammu. The CDR/FDR/BG shall be valid for 45 Days beyond the bid validity period. The original instruments in respect of cost of documents, EMD and relevant documents of L1 be submitted to the Office of Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division Gandhi Nagar Jammu at the time of allotment.

Sd/-
(Er. Rahat Gupta)
Executive Engineer
PWD (R&B) Division
Gandhi Nagar

DIP/J-8220/24
Date: 16-12-24

EDITORIAL

A fragile coalition?

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's recent critique of the Congress Party has once again brought to light the simmering differences within the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc. After previously questioning the Congress's hegemonic role in leading the alliance, the National Conference Vice-President has now targeted the party's stance on Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). His sharp remarks highlight a significant contradiction in the Congress's rhetoric on electoral integrity and add another layer of complexity to the opposition's attempt to counter the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2024 general elections. Omar's pointed observation about the Congress celebrating victories achieved through EVMs while questioning their reliability in the face of electoral losses is hard to ignore. As he put it: "When you get a hundred-plus members of Parliament using the same EVMs, and you celebrate that as 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." This statement highlights the Congress's apparent inconsistency and reflects growing frustration among regional allies over the party's approach to coalition politics. The INDIA alliance was conceived as a united front against the BJP's electoral dominance. However, Omar's critique exposes a growing rift within this coalition. His earlier challenge to the Congress's "unwillingness to share political space" with regional allies resonates with a broader sentiment among smaller parties that are wary of being overshadowed by the "grand old party." For regional players like the National Conference, maintaining their relevance within such an alliance is crucial for their political survival and influence. Political analysts suggest that Omar's recent remarks serve two purposes: bolstering the National Conference's image as a robust regional force and signaling to the Congress that equitable partnerships are non-negotiable. "The National Conference is clearly positioning itself as more than just a junior partner within the INDIA bloc," observed one commentator. "By calling out Congress's perceived double standards, Omar Abdullah is carving a distinct political identity while signaling his expectations for the alliance." The Congress's skepticism about EVMs is not new. In recent months, the party has amplified its demand for a return to paper ballots, citing concerns over potential tampering and manipulation. This narrative aligns with its broader commitment to safeguarding democratic processes. However, Abdullah's critique highlights the risk of appearing inconsistent, especially when the party has celebrated electoral victories in states like Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh, where the same EVMs were used. The Election Commission of India has consistently defended EVMs as tamper-proof and reliable. Despite this, opposition parties remain divided on the issue, with some advocating for greater transparency and others questioning the very foundation of the electoral process. This divide further complicates the INDIA bloc's ability to present a cohesive narrative against the BJP. Omar's sharp words against the Congress highlight both the complexities of coalition politics and the evolving dynamics of the opposition space in India. As strategy meetings intensify ahead of the elections, the INDIA bloc's ability to navigate these challenges will determine whether it can effectively challenge the BJP. Unity, after all, is not just a slogan; it is a necessity in the battle for political relevance and electoral success.

Syria's collapse: Foreign meddling and economic ruin

NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

By the end of November, the situation in Syria was dire. Government forces were on the brink of exhaustion, stretched thin by an economic crisis that spiralled out of control. Soldiers earned a paltry \$7 a month, with even high-ranking officers receiving only \$40. This was in blunt contrast to militia fighters funded by external powers, who earned up to \$2,000 monthly. This glaring disparity revealed not just economic fault lines but the extent of foreign intervention sustaining these militias. Meanwhile, protests erupted across Suwayda province, historically a stronghold of Assad support, highlighting widespread famine, collapsing services, and the devaluation of the Syrian pound. Discontent was palpable, threatening to upend the regime's fragile grasp on power.

Iran, Syria's long-time ally, reportedly pressured Assad to address these challenges. Tehran's warnings accentuated the erosion of public trust and a crumbling economy, urging decisive action. Yet Assad seemed increasingly aloof, allegedly seeking new alliances with Gulf nations, hoping these relationships would secure his future.

By December, reports emerged that the United States and the United Arab Emirates were considering

lifting sanctions on Assad—but only if he severed ties with Iran and halted arms transfers to Hezbollah. This diplomatic manoeuvre was a calculated strategy to weaken Assad's regime further. Relief from Caesar sanctions was an unlikely prospect given Washington's decade-long effort to dismantle the Assad family rule. The outcome was preordained: Assad was isolated, and the geopolitical chessboard advanced. The trajectory of Assad's downfall mirrors a broader pattern in Western foreign policy. Leaders once celebrated as reformers—from Saddam Hussein to Muammar Gaddafi—are vilified when their geopolitical utility wanes. Assad, who was once lauded for fostering coexistence among Syria's religious and ethnic groups, became the West's pariah.

In 2010, Syria was a stable nation, ranked seventh on The New York Times' "31 best places to visit." Assad met with Queen Elizabeth, hosted Nancy Pelosi, and welcomed Pope John Paul II. Yet the West's affection was short-lived. As geopolitical calculations shifted, Assad's regime was recast as the antithesis of democracy, paving the way for intervention. The Syrian conflict was never just a civil war. It was a proxy war fueled by external actors. Over 100,000 jihadists were funnelled into Syria, backed by a coalition of nations. The United States, Israel, Saudi

Arabia, and Qatar allegedly provided financial and logistical support.

Turkey and Jordan facilitated arms shipments and fighter transport. Western media amplified anti-Assad narratives, while the UK-backed White Helmets shaped public perceptions. Each player pursued its agenda, yet all converged on a singular goal: regime change. The motivations driving this coalition were diverse. The United States and Israel sought regional hegemony, neutralising perceived threats while advancing the Greater Israel project. Qatar's pipeline ambitions clashed with Assad's preference for an Iranian alternative, further entrenching divisions.

These dynamics turned Syria into a battleground for competing interests, with devastating consequences for its people. By late 2013, the influx of foreign fighters intensified. Western nations grappled with their citizens joining extremist groups in Syria. The UK reported approximately 600 fighters, while France contributed around 1,200.

Belgium, the Netherlands, and Sweden also faced significant outflows. However, the greatest contributions came from West Asia and North Africa, with Tunisia leading at 3,000 fighters, followed by Saudi Arabia at 2,500.

Russia's involvement, particularly from regions like Chechnya, underscored

the conflict's global reach. The arms supply chain further exacerbated the war. Gulf states like Qatar and Saudi Arabia allegedly supplied weapons, supported by over 160 military cargo flights. These arms, transported through Turkey and Jordan, sustained rebel factions. European nations, such as Croatia, indirectly contributed by routing surplus weapons through Jordan. This complex web of arms smuggling empowered extremist groups, further destabilising Syria. Western hypocrisy was stark.

While denouncing Assad's regime, the United States supported "moderate rebels" aligned with Al Qaeda and ISIS. Declassified documents revealed this duplicity. In 2012, General Michael Flynn's memo to the Pentagon warned that the opposition included jihadist factions. Similarly, Hillary Clinton's advisor, Jake Sullivan, acknowledged in an email that "Al Qaeda is on our side in Syria." The West's support for these groups undercut its claims of promoting democracy, revealing a strategy rooted in destabilisation. Atrocity propaganda became a central tool in the anti-Assad narrative. Staged chemical attacks, amplified by the White Helmets, justified military intervention.

Western media perpetuated these fabrications, obscuring the reality on the ground. Idlib province, under "rebel" control,

became a dystopian preview of Syria's potential future: public executions, forced veiling of women, and sectarian slogans. This grim reality highlighted the consequences of regime change.

Operation Timber Sycamore, the CIA's covert programme, exemplified Western duplicity. Billions of dollars in weapons were funnelled to extremist factions, prolonging the war.

The irony was stark: the West, claiming to combat terrorism, empowered the very groups destabilising the region. Syria's devastation became a witness to the destructive nature of interventionist policies. Syria's collapse parallels other Western interventions. Iraq's 2003 invasion, justified by the false pretext of weapons of mass destruction, left the nation in tatters. Libya, once Africa's wealthiest country, descended into anarchy following Gaddafi's overthrow—these interventions, framed as humanitarian missions, unleashed chaos, empowering extremist factions and creating power vacuums. The broader motivations behind these actions lie in geopolitics.

Syria's strategic location, its role as a buffer between Iran and Israel, and its proximity to oil-rich regions made it a prime target. The West's desire to reshape the region's political structure has driven decades of intervention, often with

catastrophic consequences. Meanwhile, allies like Saudi Arabia and Turkey, despite their human rights abuses, remain central to Western strategy, exposing the moral bankruptcy of interventionist policies. Syria's tragedy is a miniature of a global pattern. The collapse of nations like Iraq, Libya, and Syria reflects a broader system where sovereignty is sacrificed for strategic interests. Foreign interventions, far from promoting democracy or stability, have left legacies of destruction, displacement, and despair.

The narrative of "humanitarian intervention" serves as a veneer, masking the true motives of power and greed. As the 50th anniversary of Iran's 1979 revolution approaches in 2029, the stakes are higher than ever. Iran's defiance of Western hegemony remains a critical factor in the region's future. The forces shaping West Asia—Israel, Turkey, and Western powers—are poised to challenge Iran's resilience.

Syria's collapse serves as both a warning and a call to scrutinise the ethics of intervention. The legacy of these actions is clear: a world shaped by greed, ambition, and the devastating cost of unchecked power.

(The writer is a senior journalist and a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)

Bridging Divides in the Workplace

SAKSHI SETHI

With the advent of the 21st generation, the division of people into sharply opposing groups has increasingly infiltrated workplaces, reflecting the broader societal divides in politics, culture and values. In professional settings, it is often referred to as polarisation and can hinder collaboration, damage relationships, and undermine organisational effectiveness. Addressing workplace polarisation requires proactive leadership, open communication, and an emphasis on shared goals. Polarisation often stems from various sources such as divergent personal values where the employees bring their political, cultural and social identities into the workplace.

Differences in beliefs particularly on sensitive issues such as gender, race

and political ideologies lead to conflicts. On the other hand, media coverage, political campaigns, or social movements heighten tensions among employees with differing viewpoints. A lack of open dialogue within teams fosters echo chambers, where employees interact only with like-minded individuals, reinforcing biases and misunderstandings. Also, differences in work styles, priorities and values between generations can create friction. Younger employees may prioritise social activism, while older colleagues might value traditional workplace norms.

The impact of this kind of polarisation on organisational health and employee wellbeing can be significant. It can hamper teamwork, as employees will become less willing to cooperate with those holding opposing views which will stifle



innovation and productivity. Disagreements on personal or political issues can also lead to distrust among colleagues, creating a toxic work environment. Employees who feel alienated or marginalised due to their beliefs may seek opportunities elsewhere, resulting in talent loss. Workplace conflicts rooted in polarisation can lead to stress, burnout and decreased job satisfaction.

By encouraging respectful conversations

that allow employees to express their perspectives without fear of judgment; by implementing structured initiatives, such as facilitated discussions or conflict resolution workshops; by emphasising organisational objectives that unite employees and by highlighting common ground, such as shared values or team missions, can be a few measures that can reduce the focus on divisive issues and can help bridge divides. Last

but not least that play a crucial role in setting the tone for workplace interactions is that of the leader. There is no denying that inclusive leaders model respectful behaviour, encourage diverse viewpoints, and mediate conflicts effectively.

Developing guidelines that outline acceptable workplace behaviour, particularly concerning discussions on sensitive topics; making policies that promote mutual respect while preserving freedom of expression or taking initiatives such as team-building exercises, mentorship programs, or cross-department projects can help reduce silos and foster connections between employees with differing viewpoints. Undoubtedly an organisation's culture significantly influences how polarisation manifests and is addressed. A culture that values respect, inclusivity, and open-mindedness can mitigate the effects of polarisation.

Conversely, a culture that tolerates favouritism or discrimination can exacerbate divisions. Leaders must prioritise cultivating a culture where employees feel valued and heard, regardless of their beliefs or backgrounds.

Workplace polarisation reflects the broader societal divides but has unique challenges and opportunities within professional settings. While it risks collaboration, trust, and productivity, it can also catalyse growth if managed effectively. By fostering a culture of respect, promoting open dialogue, and emphasising shared goals, organisations can navigate polarisation and create environments where diverse perspectives thrive.

(The writer is an educator; views expressed are personal)

Can INDIA bloc resolve its leadership disputes and put to rest its internal strife

K S TOMAR

The INDIA bloc, a coalition of 26 ideologically diverse parties, was created to counter the BJP's electoral dominance. In the 2024 general elections, the bloc achieved a significant milestone, reducing the BJP's tally to below 240 seats. However, this success has been tempered by internal discord, which now threatens the alliance's fragile unity.

A key figure in this unfolding drama is Mamata Banerjee, the dynamic leader of the Trinamool Congress (TMC). Her aspirations for leadership within the coalition have both galvanised and fractured its members. Mamata Banerjee's National Ambitions Mamata Banerjee's bid for prominence within the INDIA bloc stems from her desire to extend her influence beyond West Bengal

and play a decisive role in shaping national politics. Her assertive style has invigorated some allies but has alienated others, exposing the persistent challenge of reconciling regional ambitions with a unified national strategy. Earlier, Banerjee proposed Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge as the bloc's chairperson, a strategic move to diminish the influence of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, one of the coalition's key architects.

This proposal, supported by leaders like Akhilesh Yadav and Arvind Kejriwal, showcased Banerjee's ability to consolidate support. However, her growing clout has sparked unease among other leaders. For instance, Lalu Prasad Yadav, a staunch Congress ally, appears to be rethinking his loyalties. Such dynamics highlight the alliance's precarious balance and the potential

for further fractures.

Lessons from the Past: UPA2 The INDIA bloc's current challenges echo the struggles faced by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA2) during its tenure. In 2012, Mamata Banerjee's dramatic exit from the UPA over policy disagreements underscored the inherent instability of coalition politics. Scandals and policy paralysis plagued UPA2, eroding its credibility and paving the way for Narendra Modi's rise.

As Banerjee's ambitions take center stage, the INDIA bloc risks repeating history. If it fails to address its internal contradictions, it could suffer the same fate as UPA2, jeopardising its ability to present a united front against the BJP. BJP's Advantage Amid Opposition Discord The BJP stands to benefit from the INDIA bloc's internal strife. While Baner-



jee wields considerable influence in West Bengal, Congress retains a broader national presence. A fragmented opposition could split anti-BJP votes, a scenario that would play into the saffron party's hands. Recent BJP gains in Maharashtra and Haryana underscore the bloc's

challenges, particularly for Congress, which has struggled to maintain dominance in key states. Seat-sharing disputes within the bloc further illustrate its lack of strategic coherence.

For instance, the Aam Aadmi Party's unilateral candidate announce-

ment could revitalise the bloc, but her assertiveness risks overshadowing Congress's central role. This tension is particularly pronounced in states like West Bengal and Kerala, where Congress directly competes with the TMC and the Left. Seat-sharing negotiations in overlap-

ping constituencies could exacerbate divisions, straining the alliance further. For Congress, retaining relevance within the INDIA bloc will require a delicate balancing act: accommodating Banerjee's influence without compromising its identity. Key Challenges for the INDIA Bloc The alliance faces several hurdles that could determine its survival:

Leadership Struggles: The lack of consensus on a prime ministerial candidate risks deepening divisions.

Unified Campaign Narrative: A focus on governance, economic policies, and social justice can resonate with voters more effectively than personal rivalries.

Effective Coordination: Mechanisms for conflict resolution and decision-making must be strengthened. **Balancing Regional and National Goals:**

Respecting regional aspirations while pursuing a cohesive national agenda is critical.

A Test of Political Maturity: Mamata Banerjee's ambitions underscore her political acumen and the complexities of coalition politics. While her leadership could energise the INDIA bloc, it also risks deepening divisions. Navigating this intricate web of regional and national aspirations will test the bloc's political maturity.

The upcoming state elections and the 2029 general elections will be pivotal in determining whether the INDIA bloc can overcome its internal strife and emerge as a credible alternative to the BJP. Resolving leadership disputes, crafting a compelling narrative, and presenting a unified front are critical to its success.

(The writer is a policy analyst based in Shimla; views are personal)

97 new ESI hospitals approved in last decade in India: Centre

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) has approved the set up for 97 new ESI hospitals across the country in the last ten years, said Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje on Monday.

In a written reply in Lok Sabha today, Karandlaje also informed that ESIC also set up new ESI hospitals and dispensaries across the country.

ESIC provides comprehensive medical care in the form of medical attendance, treatment, drugs and dressings, specialist consultation, and hospitalisation to Insured Persons and their families through



a network of 165 ESI hospitals and 1,590 dispensaries across the country.

In addition, "tie-up arrangements have been made with public/private hospitals for providing cashless in-patient medical services to ESI beneficiaries". This can be availed

in case, ESI hospital or in-house medical services in a particular hospital are unavailable, the MoS said.

Karandlaje also informed of major steps taken by the ESIC to upgrade and improve the facilities provided to its beneficiaries, such as the

collaboration with Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (PMJAY).

"This will provide secondary and tertiary care medical services to ESI beneficiaries through PMJAY empanelled hospitals in the country at places where ESI medical services are not adequately available," the MoS said. She informed me that the rates of benefits have also been enhanced for beneficiaries of permanent disablement benefits (PDB) and dependents' benefits (DB) schemes.

Further, a new scheme has been approved to cater medical care [including Super Specialty Treatment (SST)] for superannuated beneficiaries who have contributed to ESIC

but went out of coverage before superannuation.

The ESIC has also launched an online module to help update or edit the particulars of insured persons (IPs) and their family details.

"Aadhar-based authentication of insured persons and their family members on a voluntary basis has been adopted for providing social security benefits, including medical and cash benefits to beneficiaries," Karandlaje said.

In addition, an online portal/facility has also been started for the submission of cash benefit claims under the ESIC scheme.

This will provide hassle-free services to insured persons, and women, Karandlaje said.

WHO calls for bolster efforts to end TB in South-East Asia

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday called on countries in the Southeast Asia Region to build on the momentum created to end tuberculosis (TB).

Saima Wazed, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region urged the need to accelerate multi-sectoral efforts to reach every affected and at-risk person. The renewed efforts must also address the socio-economic determinants and impact of the disease.

"A primary healthcare-based approach that addresses TB determinants such as undernutrition, embraces new technologies including developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence and has communities and affected



populations at the center of all efforts, should be among the key elements of our reinvigorated approach," Wazed said.

According to the recent Global TB Report 2024 by the WHO, more than 50 lakh people developed TB in Southeast Asia -- accounting for 45 per cent of the global TB burden and over half of TB deaths globally in 2023.

However, the estimated number of deaths due to TB declined to 583,000 in 2023, after a peak of 763,000 in 2021. Only 22 per cent of people with TB were missed by the programme in 2023 -- a decline

from 44 per cent in 2020. Further, the report showed that more than 38 lakh people were initiated on TB treatment in the Region in 2023 -- the highest ever.

Yet, the coverage remained low with only 9 per cent of people living with HIV and less than a quarter of household contacts of bacteriologically confirmed TB patients, receiving preventive treatment, the WHO report said, adding a huge gap of nearly Rs 200 crore per year in funds.

While Wazed lauded the efforts being made by countries in the Region against TB, she cited the huge disease burden, its catastrophic socio-economic impact, and severe resource crunch calls for accelerated and urgent actions.

India glucose monitoring market to grow at 2pc CAGR by 2033: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

Amid the growing prevalence of diabetes in India, the glucose monitoring market in the country is forecast to grow at a 2 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) during 2024-33, according to a report on Monday.

The report by GlobalData, a data and analytics company, said that the growing prevalence of diabetes in India, combined with limited access to reliable monitoring tools, presents a significant public health challenge.

Effective glucose monitoring is crucial for disease management, yet affordability and accuracy remain key barriers. In 2024, India's glucose monitoring market accounted for about 10 per cent of the Asia-Pacific (APAC) market. The report said this reflects the growing focus on affordable



and innovative solutions tailored to local needs.

"Despite the growing availability of glucose monitoring solutions in India, there remain significant gaps in affordability, user education, and accessibility, particularly in rural areas. Locally manufactured devices can help bridge these gaps, but broader efforts in education and support systems are vital for effective diabetes management," said Kanchan Chauhan, Medical Devices Analyst at GlobalData.

"India's diabetes burden underscores the urgency of addressing gaps in care delivery and promoting consistent disease management. Strengthening healthcare infrastructure

and raising awareness at the community level will be key to transforming diabetes management and improving long-term health outcomes across the country," Chauhan said.

A recent report by ResearchAndMarkets.com showed that the glucose monitoring devices market in India was valued at \$366.53 million in 2024. The report said it is anticipated to project impressive growth in the forecast period with a CAGR of 7.08 per cent through 2030.

It further noted that Maharashtra and Gujarat are expected to exert a significant influence over the glucose monitoring devices market due to a higher prevalence of diabetes, a more developed healthcare infrastructure. An increasing awareness of the importance of self-monitoring glucose devices also contributed to the higher adoption.

DOCTORS RAISE CONCERN OVER RISING LUNG CANCERS AMONG NON-SMOKERS IN INDIA

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

Lung cancer, long known to affect smokers, is seeing a significant rise in people who do not smoke, said doctors on Monday, raising concern over the shift.

According to health experts, increased exposure to air pollution as the major reason.

A recent research, published in the Lancet's eClinical Medicine Journal showed that a majority of lung cancer patients in India are non-smokers. The study noted that lung cancer cases are also manifesting in India about 10 years earlier as compared to Western countries.

"India's lung cancer demographic presents a unique and concerning picture, with a rising incidence among younger individuals and an increasing number of cases occur-



ring in non-smokers. Traditionally, lung cancer has been strongly associated with smoking, but we are witnessing a shift, especially in urban populations," Dr. Prasad Adusumilli, Thoracic Surgeon and Cellular Therapist, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK), US, told IANS.

Adusumilli added that non-smokers, particu-

larly women, are increasingly diagnosed with lung cancer around 10 years earlier than their Western counterparts, often with no history of smoking.

"This may be linked to various risk factors, including exposure to environmental pollutants, genetic predisposition, and lifestyle factors," he explained.

Lung cancer is also the leading cause of cancer-related deaths globally, with increasing cases among non-smokers, especially women and Asian populations.

India reports about 75,000 new cases every year. Worryingly, a considerable number of lung cancer patients are diagnosed at advanced stages in the country.

"Non-smoker lung cancer (LCINS) mainly presents as adenocarcinoma, affecting peripheral lung tissues. Key risk factors include air pollution, radon exposure, indoor cooking fumes, and second-hand smoke," Dr. Jagadishwar Goud Gajagowni, an oncologist at a Hyderabad-based hospital.

"Environmental pollutants like fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in urban areas and radon in homes significantly contribute to risk. Poor indoor air qual-

ity from cooking with solid fuels in poorly ventilated spaces also poses a danger, especially in developing regions. Passive smoking further elevates risks, particularly in areas with high smoking rates among men, the doctor noted.

In terms of treatment, there have been significant advancements in lung cancer therapies. Minimally invasive surgical approaches and radiation therapies are offering patients a less invasive, more targeted approach, resulting in reduced recovery times and fewer side effects.

Further, "the development of targeted therapies has revolutionised the treatment landscape, offering more personalised and effective options for patients based on the molecular profile of their tumours," Adusumilli said.

Narmadapuram: People buying medicines at half rates than market price from Jan Aushadhi Kendras

AGENCIES
NARMADAPURAM, DEC 16

The residents of Narmadapuram district in Madhya Pradesh are drawing the benefits of Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya JanAushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) and cutting their medical expenses significantly.

The Jan Aushadhi Kendras, opened under the PM-BJP scheme of Prime Minister Narendra Modi government, are providing medicines at much cheaper rates to people, as compared to the branded stores.

The Jan Aushadhi Kendra has been opened in the district hospital with the help of the Red Cross and hundreds of patients are taking advantage by buying cheaper medicines from here, every day.

The cheaper medicines



mark a significant departure from the previous

practice and hence, it has generated an atmosphere

of happiness among the general public.

The Jan Aushadhi Kendra, being operated by the Civil Surgeon Dr. Sunita Kalme is providing a lot of relief to the city residents as they are buying affordable and cheaper medicines from here.

A couple of beneficiaries also spoke to IANS about the benefits of the path-breaking scheme.

Beneficiary Alok Sharma said that earlier many people like him were buying expensive medicines from outside but now getting medicines at cheaper rates. It is very beneficial for the general public. PM Modi has initiated a very good scheme, the public at large is going to get a lot of benefits from the scheme.

Beneficiary Ashish Soni said, "there are very

expensive medicines available in the market, but one can buy medicines at very cheap rates from Jan Aushadhi Kendras".

Keshav Sahu said that he is getting his father treated at this district hospital.

"The sugar tablet which used to cost Rs 260 for father is now available for only Rs 27 through Jan Aushadhi Kendra. The blood pressure pill which used to cost Rs 180 is available here for Rs 18," he said.

"When my father became very ill, I took him to Bhopal AIIMS. Here the bill for medicines stood at Rs 5,200. But I got this medicine from Jan Aushadhi Centre for only Rs 1,250. Every month, the expenditure on my father's medicines was Rs 6,000, but now that has reduced to Rs 700 to 800," he added.

Outbreak of sheep, goat plague reported in western Mongolia

AGENCIES
ULAN BATOR, DEC 16

An outbreak of a highly contagious disease affecting sheep and goats has been reported in the western Mongolian province of Khovd, local media reported on Monday.

"Several cases of Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), commonly known as sheep and goat plague, have been confirmed in Bulgan soum (an administrative subdivision) of the province," the Bulgan soum governor's office said in a statement.

As a result of the outbreak, the soum has been placed under quarantine for an undetermined period, the statement added, Xinhua news agency reported.

The livestock sector

is a cornerstone of the Mongolian economy, but frequent outbreaks of livestock diseases pose significant challenges to the industry.

Mongolia is one of the world's last surviving nomadic countries, where livestock husbandry plays a crucial role in diversifying the landlocked nation's mining-dependent economy.

As of the end of 2023, the country had 64.7 million livestock, with goats comprising 38.1 per cent of the total, according to the National Statistics Office.

In October, the southeastern Mongolian province of Dornogovi was placed under quarantine for an undetermined period due to an outbreak of CCPP, as reported by

the country's General Authority for Veterinary Services on Thursday.

Contagious Caprine Pleuropneumonia (CCPP), a severe disease which affects goats, is caused by the bacterium Mycoplasma Capricolum Subsp. Capripneumoniae.

Approximately 15,000 goats in Khatanbulag and Khuvsgul soums (administrative subdivisions) of the province are estimated to be infected. The authority stated that measures are being implemented to contain the disease, cull the infected goats, and disinfect the affected areas.

Notably, CCPP has not been reported in Mongolia since the 1950s, marking a 70-year absence, according to the authority's statement.

Mentally stimulating down time activities linked to better brain health: study

AGENCIES
CANBERRA, DEC 16

Engaging in mentally stimulating activities during down time, such as reading, can be beneficial for brain health, according to an Australian research.

In a new study, researchers from the University of South Australia (UniSA) found that some sedentary, or sitting, activities are better for cogni-

tive function than others.

The researchers assessed the 24-hour activity patterns of 397 adults aged 60 and above, and found that socially or mentally stimulating activities such as reading, playing musical instruments, crafting or talking to others are beneficial for memory and thinking abilities.

Watching television or playing video games was found to be detrimental.

The researchers said the findings could help reduce the risks of cognitive impairment, including from dementia.

"We already know that physical activity is a strong protector against dementia risk, and this should certainly be prioritised if you are trying to improve your brain health. But until now, we hadn't directly explored whether we can benefit our brain health by swapping one sedentary



behavior for another," Xinhua news agency quoted Maddison Mellow, a co-author of the study from UniSA, as saying in

the report.

She recommended breaking up time spent watching TV or gaming with five-minute bursts of physical activity or more cognitively-engaged seated activity.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that over 55 million people globally have dementia, with nearly 10 million new cases diagnosed annually.

In Australia, about 411,100

people (or one in every 1000 people) are living with dementia. Nearly two-thirds are women.

Globally, the World Health Organization estimates that more than 55 million people have dementia with nearly 10 million new cases each year.

And, while the 'move more, sit less' message certainly holds true for cardiometabolic and brain health, the research -

conducted by a team of UniSA researchers including Mellow, Prof Dot Dumuid, Dr Alexandra Wade, Prof Tim Olds, Dr Ty Stanford, Prof Hannah Keage, and Associate Prof Ashleigh Smith; with researchers from the University of Leicester, and the University of Newcastle -

shows that a more nuanced approach is needed when it comes to thinking about the link between sedentary behaviours and cognitive function.

'India-Bangladesh relations everlasting': Mukti Joddhas on Vijay Diwas

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, DEC 16

Relations between India and Bangladesh are everlasting and a few minor incidents will have no impact, Mukti Joddhas (freedom fighters) from the neighbouring country said during the Vijay Diwas celebrations in Kolkata on Monday.

"Those who are fomenting trouble in Bangladesh now have no knowledge of history. They do not know what we went through during the Liberation War or the support that we received from India and her armed forces. They do not know what kind of torture the people of Bangladesh went through. Some people, with little knowledge, are speaking about attacking India. Do they even realise India's military might? Hopefully, this is a passing phase and things will get back to normal soon," one of the Mukti Joddhas said.

Another one joked that one may even change



his spouse, but nobody turns his face away from a friendly and helpful neighbour.

Brigadier General Md Aminur Rahman (ret'd), head of the delegation of Mukti Joddhas present at the Indian Army's Eastern Command headquarters in Fort William, Kolkata, said that relations between the two nations are too strongly entrenched to be disturbed.

Others said that things

may not be as bad in Bangladesh as is being portrayed by those with vested interests on either side of the border. Some incidents may be taking place in certain pockets, but those would not affect the relations between the two nations that run deep.

"Much of what is being said about the situation in Bangladesh is hearsay. There are groups with vested interests on both sides.

The truth is different. The relationship between our two countries and the people is not that fragile to be broken due to some isolated incidents.

If relations had broken down, how are we visiting India? How is an Indian Army delegation visiting Bangladesh," said Maj Gen Abdus Salam Chaudhary (ret'd).

Wreaths were laid at Vijay Smarak in Fort William during the day by

West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose, Lt Gen R C Tiwari, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, several serving and retired military officers and Mukti Joddhas.

A military tattoo has been organised in the evening that is expected to be attended by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Vijay Diwas is celebrated on December 16 every year by the Indian Armed Forces to commemorate India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 War which led to the Liberation of Bangladesh.

During the War, Indian troops (then called the Mitra Bahini) and Mukti Joddhas fought shoulder to shoulder to crush the highly oppressive Pakistan Army that went on a spree of murder and rape against the Bengali-speaking population of what was then East Pakistan.

The War ended on December 16 with the surrender of over 90,000 Pakistani troops and their collaborators.

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

There are 21 "fake universities" operating in the country and the respective state governments are taking action against them, the Parliament was informed on Monday.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said in a reply in Lok Sabha that the list of fake universities is available on the website of the University Grants Commission (UGC) at <https://www.ugc.gov.in/universitydetails/Fakeuniversity>.

Out of these 21 "fake universities", a maximum of eight are functioning in Delhi, according to the website.

The Minister said that to prevent these institutions from defrauding and cheating students by misrepresenting themselves as "Universities," the Central government has requested Chief Secretaries of all the states and Union Territories to take legal action for the closure of these institutions.



In a reply to questions from Sudheer Gupta and Dhairyasheel Sambhajirao Mane, the Minister said that apart from issuing public notices for general awareness through social media and UGC website for cautioning the general public, students, parents and other stakeholders, other steps have also been taken by the UGC/government against such "fake Universities."

He said that FIRs have been lodged against several self-styled institutions/universities and show cause notices/warning notices have also been issued to the unauthorised institutes awarding invalid degrees.

In response to another question, Minister of State

for Education Sukanta Majumdar told the Lok Sabha that there has been an overall increase of Rs 2875.29 crore in the budget allocation to the Department of Higher Education in 2024-25 as compared to 2023-24.

The Department's total budget in 2024-25 was Rs 47,619.77 crore as compared to Rs 44,744.48 crore in 2023-24, MoS Majumdar said in reply to a question from Dushyant Singh.

In response to a question on public expenditure on institutions of higher education in Rajasthan, the MoS said that a total of Rs 556.86 crore has been released in FY 2024-25 till November 30, 2024, to three Centrally Funded Higher Education Institutions in Rajasthan, namely IIT Jodhpur, Malaviya National Institute of Technology Jaipur and Central University of Rajasthan.

Further, Rs 535.99 crore was provided for setting up IIM Udaipur and IIIT Kota in Rajasthan, the MoS said.

PM Modi to inaugurate projects worth Rs 46,300cr in Rajasthan tomorrow

AGENCIES
JAIPUR, DEC 16

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Rajasthan on December 17 and inaugurate projects worth Rs 46,300 crore in Jaipur.

PM Modi will participate in 'Ek Varsh-Parinaam Utkarsh' (completion of one year of Rajasthan government programme during which he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for 24 projects related to energy, road, railways and water worth over Rs 46,300 crores.

He will also inaugurate nine projects worth over Rs 11,000 crore which include seven Central gov-

ernment projects and two state government projects and will lay the foundation stone for 15 projects worth over Rs 35,300 crore which include nine Central government projects and six state government projects.

The projects being inaugurated during the event include Navnera Barrage, Smart Electricity Transmission Network and Asset Management System projects, Railway electrification of Bhilldi-Samdari-Luni-Jodhpur-Merta Road-Degana-Ratangarh section and Package 12 of Delhi-Vadodara Green Field Alignment (NH-148N) (Major bridge over Mej

River upto junction with SH-37A) project among other projects.

These projects will help to provide an easy commute to people and fulfil the energy needs of the state in line with the PM's vision of green energy.

Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone for construction work of Ramgarh Barrage & Mahalpur Barrage and system for transfer of water from Navnera Barrage to Bisalpur Dam and Isarda Dam through aqueduct on Chambal River at a cost of over Rs 9,400 crore.

Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone for installation of rooftop

solar plants on government office buildings, development of one 2000 MW solar park and two phases of 1000 MW solar parks in Poogal (Bikaner) and drinking water transmission line from Saipau (Dholpur) to Bharatpur-Deeg-Kumher-Nagar-Kaman & Pahari and Chambal-Dholpur-Bharatpur retrofitting work.

The foundation stone will be laid for works related to the Luni-Samdari-Bhilldi Double Line, Ajmer-Chandriya Double Line and Jaipur-Sawai Madhopur Double Line railway project as well as other energy transmission related projects.

SC says no to PIL seeking direction to designate BMC as sole planning authority for Mumbai

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking a direction to the Urban Development Department of Maharashtra government to designate BMC (Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation) as the sole and centralised planning and sanctioning authority for the city of Mumbai.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan asked the petitioner, Earth, a non-government organisation, to approach the Bombay High Court.

Sensing the disinclination of the apex court to

entertain the plea, the petitioner's counsel sought liberty to withdraw the PIL. Ultimately, the matter was dismissed as withdrawn by the apex court.

The PIL said that Section 40 of the Maharashtra Regional & Town Planning (MRTP) Act, 1966, which empowers the state government to appoint a Special Planning Authority (SPA) for notified areas, was enacted before the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, effective June 1993.

"This amendment introduced Part IXA, titled 'The Municipalities' (Articles 243P to 243ZG along with Twelfth Schedule), establishing the framework for

the constitution, composition, and responsibilities of Municipalities. However, Section 40 was not amended to explicitly define the roles, powers, and functions of a SPA concerning matters outlined in Schedule XII," the plea added.

Despite this lack of clarity, the Urban Development Department proceeded to appoint multiple SPAs, which diluted the planning and sanctioning powers of BMC, contented the petitioner, adding that "this ambiguity has adversely affected BMC's ability to address key issues in Schedule XII, including urban planning, land use regulation, building construction, road and bridge

maintenance, and slum improvement".

The PIL, filed through advocate Dilip Annasaheb Taur, said that the approach has hindered urban development and limited citizens' access to amenities due to a lack of transparency and consistency in the approval processes of the SPAs, the transfer of public amenities, and the execution of the 18 responsibilities outlined in the Schedule XII.

"The insufficient transparency in transferring amenities to the BMC obstructs effective urban planning and negatively impacts residents, depriving them of essential services and facilities," it said.

Holds talks on national policy draft on agriculture: Punjab minister

AGENCIES
CHANDIGARH, DEC 16

Punjab Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian on Monday held deliberations with officers on the draft of the national policy framework on agricultural marketing and decided to call a meeting with farmers and other stakeholders within this week.

Khudian, along with Additional Chief Secretary Anurag Verma, Chairman of Punjab State Farmers' and Farm Workers' Commission Sukhpal Singh, Secretary of the Punjab Mandi Board, Ramvir, asked the department officials to call a meeting with



representatives of farmers, agriculture experts and other stakeholder immediately to analyse and consult on the draft policy shared by the Central Government.

He further said that the draft policy needs thorough analysis and consultation with stakeholders as it could have serious impli-

cations for the state and its farmers. He said the Agriculture Department has already shot a letter to S.K. Singh, Deputy Agriculture Marketing Adviser and Convener of the Drafting Committee of the Central Government to give at least three-week time to send comments on the draft policy.

BRS seeks to move privilege motion against Telangana Finance Minister over debt data

AGENCIES
HYDERABAD, DEC 16

The Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) Legislative Party has sought permission of Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad to approve a privilege motion against Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka for presenting misleading data on Telangana's debt.

The BRS leaders accused the government of inflating debt figures to Rs 7 lakh crore, contrary to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) report citing the debt as Rs 3.89 lakh crore.

"The Finance Minister's statements misled the Assembly and people of Telangana," BRS Working President K.T. Rama

Rao said, citing the RBI Handbook of Statistics on Indian States.

The BRS demanded that the government present accurate debt figures in the Assembly or allow the Privilege Motion for debate. KTR, as Rama Rao is popularly known, highlighted past precedence when a similar motion was permitted under Speaker Manohar against then Chief Minister Kiran Kumar Reddy, emphasising the need to uphold legislative traditions.

The BRS also strongly criticized the government for prioritising tourism discussions in the Assembly while ignoring pressing issues like the Lagacherla farmers' imprisonment. KTR called for an immediate debate on the incident,

stressing its significance, especially as it occurred in the Speaker's home district, Vikarabad.

KTR took a sarcastic dig at the government, coining the terms "Delhi Tourism" and "Jail Tourism". He accused the administration of prioritising frequent trips to Delhi and unjustly jailing dissenters, including Lagacherla farmers, social media activists, and opposition leaders.

Raising concerns over unpaid dues to sarpanchs, the BRS pointed out the government's selective fund allocation favouring large contractors. KTR urged the Speaker to intervene and address these financial hardships faced by local representatives.

The BRS leader expressed outrage over

new restrictions preventing former MLAs from entering the Assembly premises. He contrasted this with the openness during the BRS regime, where ex-legislators had free access to Ministers and the Chief Minister.

"Symbols of protest like nooses, dried crops, and lanterns were once permitted in the Assembly. Now, even placards are being restricted," KTR remarked, accusing the government of silencing opposition voices.

KTR criticised Vikramarka for announcing financial aid for tenant farmers outside the Assembly, bypassing legislative norms. "Such announcements should be made within the Assembly, where questions can

be raised," he said.

Bhatti's announcement that Rs 12,000 financial assistance would be provided to agricultural labourers was termed as a violation of Assembly procedures. It was pointed out that policy decisions should be announced only in the Assembly when it is in session, and Vikramarka seemed to have forgotten this principle. It was also informed that this matter was brought to the attention of the Speaker.

Questioning the credibility of the government's welfare promises, KTR stated: "The public no longer trusts Sankranti schemes or votes in the name of deities. The government has failed to deliver on its commitments."

Constitution debate in RS: Those who practice hate politics are lecturing us, says Kharage

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

Mallikarjun Kharage, the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha joined the debate trailing the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution, and used the opportunity on Monday to hit out at the ruling BJP over its "hate politics." Kharage also responded to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "jumla" charge at the Congress and said that it's his government which was fooling people with false promises.

Kharage, speaking in the Upper House, said that it was under the Indira Gandhi government in 1971 that the Indian forces divided Pakistan into two parts and liberated Bangladesh. He also urged the Centre to ensure the safeguarding of Hindu minorities in the neighbouring country.

He said that BJP leaders keep abusing Jawaharlal Nehru as well as Mahatma Gandhi and then go on to give lectures on probity in public life.

"Those who hate Ashok chakra, those who hate

the Constitution, they are giving us lectures today," said the Congress chief.

Further dishing out advice to the ruling BJP, he said that they should first make amends for their own wrongdoings before uncovering the failures of others.

"There have been numerous landmark achievements under past governments but those currently in power are only focused on pointing fingers at former regimes. Have you come here to spread canards, dig out mistakes of the past or

participate in a healthy discussion on the Constitution," Kharage said.

Kharage also hit out at the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) over its 'disdain' for the national flag and said that it was only after the court order that it hoisted the Tricolour at its headquarters in 2002.

"In 1949, the RSS leaders opposed the Constitution of India because it was not based on Manusmriti.

They never accepted the National Flag. It was on January 26, 2002, that

Tiranga was unfurled at the RSS headquarters for the first time on court orders," Kharage remarked.

Responding to PM Modi's 'jumla' charge at the Congress, during his reply to the Constitution debate in Lok Sabha, Kharage said, "You accuse us of speaking lies. You are the biggest liar. You promised Rs 15 lakh in people's bank accounts, you promised two crore jobs, you promised to double the income of farmers. None of this has been done yet."

Manippady's U-turn on Waqf issue due to political pressure: Dy CM Shivakumar

AGENCIES
BELAGAVI (KARNATAKA), DEC 16

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister, D.K. Shivakumar, on Monday said that the former Chairman of the State Minorities Commission, Anwar Manippady, was doing a U-turn due to political pressure.

Speaking to reporters at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha, he said, "I watched Anwar Manippady's statements on social media. He had said that he had written to

the Prime Minister and the Home Minister. The Chief Minister has also quoted his statements in a post on X. The records won't go anywhere, let him release the documents before we do." He was replying to queries on Anwar Manippady retracting his statement. Asked about the CM's statement that the investigation must be handed over to the CBI, he said, "All facts are before us. Let the CBI write to the state government seeking

permission to investigate, we will think about it then. We will not hand this over to the CBI. The BJP knows this and hence are seeking a CBI enquiry."

Asked why so much confusion was being created about this issue, he said the media was the one doing it.

"You are the one who is creating the confusion. You have reported what Anwar said and the CM has also quoted his statement in a post.

India, Bangladesh 1971 war veterans' exchange visit to commemorate Vijay Diwas

AGENCIES
DHAKA, DEC 16

Eight Indian military veterans of Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War reached Dhaka while eight officers of Bangladesh Army arrived in Kolkata to join the Vijay Diwas celebrations in the two countries, officials said.



Bangladesh officials and the Indian High Commission in Dhaka said two serving officers from both sides comprised the delegations that will attend the celebrations in Dhaka and Kolkata. They reached their destination cities on Sunday.

The Bangladesh delegation comprised Mukti Jodhas, who were part of the guerrilla resistance force in East Pakistan opposing the Pakistan rule there.

The Vijay Diwas celebration and the visit of the two countries' delega-

tions come amid strains over the alleged violence against the minority Hindu community in Bangladesh since the ouster of premier Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime in a student-led uprising on August 5. Hasina fled the country and has since taken refuge in India.

The interim government of Muhammad Yunus has firmly rejected any major communal violence. Hindus constitute around eight per cent of Bangladesh's population.

"The exchange of veter-

ans' visits is a reminder of friendship forged in 1971," a political analyst in Dhaka said.

He said Indian External Affairs Secretary Vikram Misri's one-day Dhaka visit on December 9 for foreign office consultations with his counterpart Jashim Uddin partly eased the tensions in bilateral ties as he also met Yunus and his de-facto Foreign Minister Touhid Hossain.

"Now the exchange of the veterans' visits is expected to manifest the goodwill of both the coun-

tries for each other," the analyst said.

Both India and Bangladesh celebrate the victory over Pakistan on December 16, 1971, and every year invite each other's war veterans and serving officers to participate in the celebrations in the two countries.

Bangladesh celebrates its Independence Day on March 26 but Dhaka emerged as the free capital of a free country on December 16 after nine months of Liberation War with crucial Indian assistance.

"These annual bilateral visits provide a platform for Mukti Jodhas and Liberation War veterans to celebrate the unique friendship of the two countries," the Indian High Commission said in a statement.

It added that the occasion renews memories of the Liberation War "which

epitomises the shared sacrifices of the armed forces of India and Bangladesh for the cause of Bangladesh's freedom from occupation, oppression, and mass atrocities".

Vijay Diwas is not just a celebration of military success but also a reminder of India's commitment to justice and humanitarian values. The war showcased India's capability to respond decisively to aggression while standing up for oppressed populations. It also strengthened India's position as a regional power and highlighted the importance of military preparedness and strategic diplomacy.

In Bangladesh, the day is observed as Victory Day, a national holiday commemorating their liberation. The shared history of December 16 emphasises the enduring bond between India and Bangladesh.

Ukrainian military releases image of North Korean troops allegedly killed in Kursk: Report

AGENCIES
SEOUL, DEC 16



The Ukrainian military has released photos and footage of what appear to be dozens of North Korean soldiers killed along with Russian troops in Russia's western Kursk border region, a Ukrainian media outlet has said.

Ukrainska Pravda reported Sunday, citing information from a drone unit, that the soldiers whose bodies were shown covered in snow were killed during assaults in the Russian region bordering Ukraine on Saturday, Yonhap news agency reported.

"The Madiar channel emphasised that this is a collaborative effort of FPV (first person view)-drone pilots of the 414th Unmanned Strike Aviation Systems Regiment, the Mahura Brigade, the 95th Air Assault Brigade, the 36th Separate Marine Brigade, the 1st Tank Brigade and the 17th Tank Brigade,"

the outlet said.

The details of the post shared on the drone unit's Telegram channel could not be verified immediately.

On Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia could extend its deployment of North Koreans to other parts of the front line.

"We already have preliminary data that the Russians have begun to use North Korean soldiers in their assaults. A significant number of them," Zelenskyy said in an address.

"The Russians include them in combined units and use them in operations in the Kursk region. So far, only there. But we have information suggesting their use could extend to other parts of the front

line," he said.

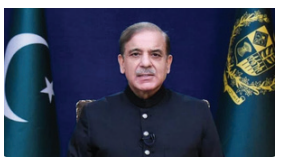
South Korea and the US have accused North Korea of sending thousands of soldiers to Russia, with some of them engaging in combat in the western Kursk border region.

Last month, it was reported that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un held a meeting with Russia's visiting Defence Minister and expressed his support for Russia's war efforts against Ukraine.

According to the Pyongyang's state media Kim had a "friendly and trustworthy" meeting with Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov on November 29 amid reports of North Korea sending thousands of its troops to Russia in support of Moscow's war against Ukraine.

Pakistan to act against human traffickers after boat capsized in Greece

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD, DEC 16



Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has taken serious note of the boat capsizing incident in southern Crete Island of Greece, which was carrying dozens of Pakistanis trying to enter Europe illegally. He directed the country's interior ministry to identify and nab the mafia of human traffickers operating in the country. So far, at least one Pakistani is confirmed dead while at least 47 others have been rescued following incidents of capsized boats in the south of Crete Island of Greece on Sunday. Pakistan foreign office stated that they cannot confirm the number of deceased or missing Pakistani nationals for now.

"According to initial reports, 47 Pakistanis are among those rescued following yesterday's incidents of capsized boats in Crete Island of Greece. One Pakistani is confirmed to be among the dead. At this stage, we are unable to confirm the number of

deceased or missing Pakistani nationals," read a statement issued by Pakistan's foreign office.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated, "Human trafficking is a tragic crime that claims many lives and causes numerous families to suffer every year."

"Human traffickers are a cruel mafia who exploit the poor by deceiving them with false and ambitious dreams," he added.

The boats were carrying cargo vessels, carrying illegal migrants, who were trying to enter Europe illegally. The incident has opened up focus on the presence of networks of human traffickers operating in different parts of Pakistan, who target the poor and struggling people to manipulate them into using illegal means to get out of the country.

"Human Trafficking is

a heinous practice that causes immeasurable pain and suffering," said the President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari.

The boat capsizing incident has also prompted the Pakistan government to activate its Crisis Management Unit (CMU) to provide assistance in the identification of Pakistani nationals and other activities related to their required help.

"The embassy has also activated its Crisis Management Unit (CMU) to support Pakistanis in Greece", maintained the Pakistan foreign office.

Moreover, Pakistan's interior ministry has directed the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to initiate immediate action against the human trafficking mafia along with smuggling networks in the country.

"In response to the tragedy, the interior minister has constituted an inquiry committee tasked with investigating the incident which is expected to submit its findings within five days", maintained Pakistan Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

MILLIONS OF AUSTRALIANS WARNED TO PREPARE FOR SEVERE HEAT, POSSIBLE FIRES

AGENCIES
SYDNEY, DEC 16



Millions of people in southeast Australia have been warned to prepare for severe heat and possible fires.

Temperatures across Victoria, Australia's second-most populous state, and in parts of South Australia were forecast to surpass 40 degrees Celsius on Monday, prompting widespread emergency warnings.

In Melbourne, the capital of Victoria, the temperature is forecast to hit 41 degrees Celsius, the city's hottest December day since 2019.

A total fire ban has been declared for most of Victoria and firefighting authorities across the state have been put on high alert.

Meteorologists have warned that dry lightning storms could elevate the fire risk.

Jason Heffernan, chief executive of the Country Fire Authority, said at a press conference on Sunday evening that a combination of the heat and dry winds would make for horrendous fire condi-

tions in Victoria's west.

"If fires do start in the landscape, they will be hard to suppress, they will spread very quickly," he said.

A Boeing 737 Fireliner with the capacity to carry and dump 15,000 liters of water or fire retardant has been deployed to the state, Xinhua news agency reported.

Chris Hardman, chief fire officer from Forest Fire Management Victoria, said that 54 firefighting aircraft have been moved around the state to ensure they are

located close to where the risk is.

The state government has issued a heat health warning, advising people to stay indoors and urging them to check on those most at risk, including the elderly.

Last month, the Australian emergency authorities had warned that much of the country's south coast is facing an increased bushfire risk during the upcoming summer.

The National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC) released the

Seasonal Bushfire Outlook for Summer 2024, warning of an increased fire risk for large areas of the country.

It said that approximately half of the southeastern state of Victoria, Australia's second-most populous state, the southern coastline of the state of Western Australia (WA), and parts of the coastal region of the state of South Australia (SA) have an increased fire risk.

Large parts of the Northern Territory (NT) outback are facing an increased fire risk, AFAC warned, as are

inland areas in New South Wales (NSW), the most populous state, and WA's central west coast.

According to AFAC, mean temperatures across Australia between April and October were the third-highest recorded since 1910 and rainfall in the country's south was below average.

"The dry winter and spring period across southern Australia mean the landscape is well primed for bushfires. Communities should be ready for bushfires and have a plan in place. We hope the rains come but it makes sense to plan as if they don't," AFAC chief executive Rob Webb said in a statement.

The summer long-range forecast released separately by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) showed that the season is likely to be warmer than average across most of the country.

However, it also forecast more summer rainfall, particularly in December.

"October to April is Australia's peak time for severe thunderstorms, tropical cyclones, flooding, heatwaves and bushfires," the BoM said.

ISRAELI PM NETANYAHU CONFIRMS 'VERY FRIENDLY' CALL WITH TRUMP ABOUT NEED FOR 'VICTORY' AGAINST IRAN

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV, DEC 16



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke with US President-elect Donald Trump about Israel's determination to continue acting against Iran and its armed proxies whenever they try to harm the Jewish state, the premier said in a video statement.

Netanyahu said on Sunday evening that it was a "very friendly, very warm, and very important conversation" about the need for Israel to "complete its victory".

"We are committed to preventing Hezbollah from rearming," he said.

"This is an ongoing test for Israel, we must meet it -- and we will meet it. I say to Hezbollah and Iran in no uncertain terms -- to prevent you from harming us, we will continue to act against you as much as necessary, in every arena

and at all times."

Netanyahu reiterated that recent airstrikes against Syrian military sites were carried out to ensure that the weapons would not be used against Israel in the future. Israel also hit arms supply routes to Hezbollah, he said.

"We have no interest in a conflict with Syria," Netanyahu said firmly.

"We will determine

Israel's policy toward Syria according to the emerging reality on the ground."

"Syria is not the same Syria," he said, arguing that Israel is changing the Middle East.

"Lebanon is not the same Lebanon, Gaza is not the same Gaza, and the leader of the axis -- Iran -- is not the same Iran."

During the conversation with Trump, Netan-

yahu pointed to shifts in the Middle East, claiming that Israeli operations in Lebanon, Gaza, Yemen, and Syria have diminished Iran's influence over the past year.

"Within a few days, we destroyed capabilities that the Assad regime had built over decades," Netanyahu noted, referring to a series of intense Israeli airstrikes during the past few days following the collapse of the Assad government in Syria on December 8.

He added that the strikes aimed to prevent weapons from being used against Israel or transferred from Syria to Hezbollah. Netanyahu also said his conversation with Trump included efforts to secure the release of around 100 hostages held by Hamas in Gaza. Israeli state broadcaster Kan TV reported progress in negotiations but noted that no breakthrough had been reached as of Sunday.

Mystery illness that causes 'excessive body shaking' affects about 300 people in Uganda

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

About 300 people in Uganda have reportedly been affected by a mystery illness that causes 'excessive body shaking'.

The disease, named 'Dinga Dinga' by locals in the country's Bundibugyo district, is majorly affecting women and girls, Ugandan newspaper The Monitor reported.

The symptoms of the illness include fever and excessive body shaking which makes walking a challenge. The illness is currently being treated with antibiotics, given by community health teams, and no fatalities have been reported so far, Dr. Kiyita Christopher, the district health officer, was quoted as saying.

"There is no scientific evidence that herbal medicine can treat this disease.

Bangladesh plans national election by late 2025 or mid 2026

AGENCIES
DHAKA, DEC 16



Bangladeshi interim government's Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus Monday said it may be possible to hold the next national elections at the end of 2025 or the first half of 2026.

"The election can be scheduled between the end of 2025 and the first half of 2026," he said in a televised speech to the nation at 10 am local time on Monday marking the country's Victory Day.

Yunus said he repeatedly appealed to all to arrange the elections after completing all the necessary major reforms.

But, due to political consensus, it may be possible to hold the elections by the end of 2025 after completing minor reforms based on the preparation of an accurate voter list, he said.

Yunus urged the Election Commission and all social institutions and political parties to take

various creative programmes to achieve this goal. He suggested creating such a tradition that first-time voters in all elections, including local government polls, will ensure about 100 per cent voting in all centers.

"If we can ensure this, no government in the future will dare to snatch the people's voting rights," the Bangladesh Chief Advisor added.

Bangladeshi economist Yunus took oath as the head of the country's interim government on August 8.

The decision to appoint Yunus was taken by Bangladesh President Mohamed Shahabuddin, chiefs

of the three services and the coordinators of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement.

Shahabuddin had administered the oath to Yunus and other members of the interim government at the presidential palace in the capital Dhaka, following the fall of the government led by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Hasina, 76, had taken office for her fourth straight five-year term as the country's Prime Minister in January this year after her ruling Bangladesh Awami League (AL) party won a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections.

Emerging Indian cities see impressive job growth in 2024, outlook optimistic for next year

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

Emerging cities like Indore, Udaipur, Bhubaneswar and Jaipur have seen impressive job growth this year, with Udaipur leading with 17 per cent overall growth and Indore up by 14 per cent, a report showed on Monday.

Other emerging cities like Jaipur and Ahmedabad are also driving India's job market, with double-digit growth in sectors like IT, oil and gas and construction, according to the report by Naukri.com.

Jaipur emerged as one of the emerging tech hubs, registering 48 per cent growth in IT sector hiring during Q3.

Ahmedabad also bounced back during the latter half of the year, posting tremendous growth in sectors like oil and gas, construction/engineering and accounting/finance.



The hiring landscape began to stabilise in Q2 2024, as industries adjusted. By the third quarter, hiring showed a strong rebound, driven by a resurgent IT sector, emerging cities posting impressive growth, and fresher hiring stabilising.

Metro cities like Chennai, Hyderabad, and Pune led the charge in recovery, with Pune especially

bouncing back strong in the second half of the year, as it recorded a 13 per cent growth in hiring during Q3, the report mentioned.

"As we look ahead to 2025, the outlook is optimistic. Companies are expected to keep investing in AI/ML and digital transformation, while also focusing on experienced leadership," the report stressed.

In 2024, the AI/ML sectors shined, with growth rates ranging from 14-47 per cent during the year, highlighting the ongoing surge in demand for tech-driven talent.

The FMCG sector followed suit, maintaining a positive growth rate through the different quarters. The sector witnessed a flattish trend in Q1 and went on to peak at 20 per

cent growth by Q3.

Similarly, pharma/biotech continued to thrive, benefiting from ongoing healthcare needs.

While the banking and financial services sector saw a modest growth through the year, the insurance sector surged in Q2 with a 37 per cent growth, driven by rising demand for financial security, after a subdued Q1.

This momentum continued into Q3 with 23 per cent growth. The spike is largely attributed to a rising demand for financial security, as companies and individuals focused on protecting themselves against uncertainty.

The manufacturing sector as a whole has demonstrated steady progress, achieving a 6 per cent YoY growth in 2024.

According to the report, fresher hiring witnessed an increasing trend in non-IT sectors towards the second half of the year.

Coal PSUs have created 16 eco-parks on 10,942 hectare green cover in 5 years: Govt

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

Coal & Lignite public sector undertakings (PSUs) under the Ministry of Coal have established 16 eco-parks during the last 5 years in and around coal mining areas to promote environmental regeneration as well as tourism and recreational activities, Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy informed the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

To increase green cover in and around coalfields, Coal India Limited (CIL), NLC India Limited (NLCIL) and Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) have created a green cover of 10,942 hectares as part of their plantation and bio-reclamation efforts in and around coal and lignite mining areas, the minister said.

The PSUs have adopted innovative techniques in addition to traditional methods of plantation.



These include three-tier plantations, seed ball plantation, Miyawaki plantation, high-tech cultivation, bamboo plantation, and plantation on overburden dumps using drip irrigation, he explained.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) prescribes various specific and general conditions related to plantation in the Environmental Clearance (EC) of coal mining projects.

These conditions encompass measures for plantation on reclaimed degraded forest and non-forest lands. As per the EC

conditions, for reclamation and green belt development, plantations are carried out in coal mining areas, including external overburden dumps and reclaimed degraded forest as well as non-forest lands, the minister said.

The eco-friendly green cover helps to serve as a dust barrier and retain groundwater as well.

The Miyawaki method of plantation that is being widely adopted was pioneered in the 70s by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki. It involves planting native trees, shrubs and groundcover plants within every square metre.

2024 round-up: Govt completes disinvestment of Ferro Scrap Nigam, GIC Re offer for sale

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) has rounded off 2024 with the successful completion of the strategic disinvestment of Ferro Scrap Nigam Ltd (FSNL) and the GIC Re Offer for Sale, DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Monday. "Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) successfully completed the strategic disinvestment of Ferro Scrap Nigam Ltd (FSNL) at Rs 320 crore, transferring 100 per cent equity and management control," the Secretary wrote on X.

DIPAM successfully concluded the GIC Re Offer for Sale #OFS, raising Rs

2,345.55 crore by divesting 3.39 per cent of the government's stake, he further stated.

"DIPAM continues to generate value for investors through the Offer for Sale and listing route for CPSEs. By ensuring holistic value creation in Central Public Sector Enterprises DIPAM ensures performance enhancement, CAPEX growth, and trust-based asset creation for investors," Pandey added.

The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs (CCEA) had approved the sale of 100 per cent equity shareholding of MSTC Ltd in Ferro Scrap Nigam Ltd (FSNL) to Konoike Transport Co Ltd of Japan for Rs 320 crore.

FSNL, a wholly owned subsidiary of MSTC Ltd

under the Ministry of Steel, was incorporated in 1979 to provide steel mill services, specialising in the recovery and processing of scrap generated during iron and steel production across various steel plants.

The completion of the sale, in September this year, marks the culmination of a strategic disinvestment process initiated in October 2016 when the CCEA granted 'in-principle' approval for the sale of MSTC's equity stake in FSNL to a strategic buyer.

The disinvestment was executed through a two-stage auction process, overseen by a multi-layered decision-making mechanism that involved an Inter-Ministerial Group and a Core Group of Secretaries on Disinvestment.

India to end 2024 with record office space leasing activity, leads globally

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

India is set to witness a record office space leasing activity in 2024, reaching 83-85 million square feet of gross leasing value (GLV) which is a 13 per cent growth from last year, according to a report on Monday.

India's office real estate has consistently been witnessing more than 70 million square feet of GLV since 2022 across the top eight cities.

The current year 2024 is likely to register a historic high volume, driven by healthy volumes seen in the IT-BPM, BFSI, engineering and manufacturing (E&M) and flex opera-



tor spaces, said the report by Cushman & Wakefield.

India's rising attractiveness as a destination for global capability centres (GCCs) has had a big influence on demand, as GCCs now account for 30 per cent of GLV, with the share projected to rise further.

Consequently, net absorption of office space is likely to end the year with about 45 million square feet across top eight cities, setting a new record of office market leasing. Given the real estate industry's scenario in the US and China, India

is seen as the biggest driver of office leasing volume in the world.

Within APAC, India is likely going to end the year with nearly 70 per cent of region's total net absorption, the report mentioned.

Most of the pent-up demand from increasing return-to-office (RTO) of the erstwhile hybrid workforce have been captured during the 2022-24 period.

However, other drivers such as influx of new GCCs, growing flex operator footprint, rising number of unicorns, and growth of E&M sector will continue to remain intact, the report noted.

"This momentum is largely driven by fresh

leasing, accounting for over 70 per cent of activity, and the growing presence of GCCs, which contribute nearly 30 per cent of total leasing and are projected to rise to 35 per cent in 2025," said Veera Babu, Managing Director, Tenant Representation, Cushman & Wakefield.

As we move into 2025, rental growth in prime markets may shift some demand to emerging micro-markets, where supply and talent pools align.

"The focus will increasingly be on employee experience, amenities, and proximity to talent hubs, shaping the next phase of office development in India," said Babu.

India's trend GDP growth to move closer to 6.5-7 pc in FY25: Crisil

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

The main macro drivers remain healthy and India's GDP growth is likely to move closer to the trend growth of 6.5-7 per cent this fiscal, a Crisil Insight report said on Monday.

Trend GDP growth is the average sustainable rate of economic growth over time.

Private consumption growth in the country has fared better than last year in the first half of the current fiscal (FY25).

"While investment growth has moderated relative to last year, its share of GDP remains higher than the pre-pandemic decade," the report mentioned.

Technical factors contributed to an above-trend GDP growth last year. They



are expected to have a moderating effect on GDP growth this current fiscal as they normalise.

"GDP growth had averaged 6.6 per cent in the pre-pandemic decade. This fiscal is likely to see GDP growth move closer to trend growth of 6.5-7 per cent," according to the report.

It is worth noting that the main macro drivers

of growth remain healthy. Private consumption grew 6.7 per cent on average in the first half of this fiscal, compared with 4.1 per cent in the corresponding period last year. Its share in GDP at 56.3 per cent this fiscal has been higher than 56.1 per cent in the pre-pandemic decade.

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation has also been normalis-

ing. The last fiscal saw a decline in WPI inflation to -0.7 per cent. This fiscal WPI inflation has averaged 2.7 per cent, closer to the pre-pandemic 5-year average of 3.2 per cent.

In November, India's annual rate of inflation based on WPI eased to 1.89 per cent, compared to 2.36 per cent in October, as the rise in food prices slowed during the month with the fresh crop arriving in the market.

"We expect improving consumption demand to drive growth momentum this fiscal. In particular, agriculture and rural demand are poised to improve after a healthy monsoon.

This means growth will be more balanced this fiscal, even if it is lower than last year," said the Crisil report.

Hackers target YouTube creators, send fake brand collaboration offers with malware

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

In an alarming trend, cybercriminals are now increasingly targeting popular YouTube creators by exploiting fake brand collaboration offers to distribute malware, a report showed on Monday.

The malware, disguised as legitimate documents like contracts or promotional materials, is often delivered through password-protected files hosted on platforms such as OneDrive to evade detection, claimed CloudSEK, a cybersecurity firm.

"Once downloaded, the malware can steal sensitive information, including login credentials and financial data, while also granting attackers remote access to the victim's systems," said security



research Mayank Sahariya.

At the end of the email, the threat actor includes instructions and a OneDrive link to access a zip file containing the agreement and promotional materials, secured with the password. When the YouTube victim clicked the URL in the email, they were directed to a Drive page. The adversary leverages malware and

sophisticated techniques for targeted attacks. Their actions suggest a well-organised group with access to diverse tools and resources.

Key characteristics of the campaign include email payload where the malware is hidden within attachments such as Word documents, PDFs, or Excel files, often masquerading as promotional materials,

contracts or business proposals.

The phishing emails are sent from spoofed or compromised email addresses, making them seem credible. Recipients are lured into downloading the attached files, believing they are legitimate business offers.

Once the attachment is opened, the malware installs itself on the victim's system. This malware is typically designed to steal sensitive data, including login credentials, financial information, and intellectual property, or to provide remote access to the attacker.

Businesses and individuals in marketing, sales, and executive positions are the primary targets, given their propensity to engage in brand promotions and partnerships.

2025 to see new growth opportunities in tier 2, 3 cities for Indian real estate sector

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

After witnessing a bumper growth in 2024 across residential, office and industrial domains, 2025 is likely to be a year of consolidation and continued innovation for the Indian real estate sector, a report showed on Monday.

While residential and office markets can potentially stabilise after consecutive peaks, industrial and warehousing demand can witness heightened traction, fuelled by rising

manufacturing output and a thriving logistics industry, according to a Colliers India report.

In 2025, rapid urbanisation, key infrastructure project completion and industrial corridor development will create new growth opportunities, particularly in tier 2 and 3 cities.

In 2024, annual gross leasing across the top six cities reached 47 million square feet by the third quarter of the ongoing year, reflecting a 23 per cent year-on-year increase.

On the residential front, supported by stable interest rates, launches and sales across major cities of the country are likely to end on a strong note this year. Average housing prices across the top eight cities have already surged 11 per cent annually in 2024.

The first nine months of 2024 saw a 17 per cent annual growth in industrial and warehousing demand, registering 20.2 million square feet of leasing across the top five cities. Almost half of the



leasing activity is expected to come from Delhi-NCR and Chennai.

Institutional inflows in

billion real estate investments during the first nine months of 2024, office and industrial and warehousing segment together accounted for over 70 per cent share.

Buoyed by domestic growth prospects and long-term returns, institutional investments are likely to be around \$5-6 billion by the end of 2024.

"2025 could be another year, wherein multiple real estate classes ride high on investor and end-user optimism. Notably, alternative asset classes such

as data centres, co-living and senior housing are likely to witness accelerated growth, reflecting a broader and steady shift in demographics and consumer preferences," said Badal Yagnik, Chief Executive Officer, Colliers India.

A supportive regulatory environment and recent regulatory push such as SM-REITs (Small and Medium REITs) and refinement of state-specific RERA (Real Estate Regulation and Development Authority Act) regulations have enhanced transpar-

ency and institutionalisation in the real estate sector.

Policy frameworks have also driven a sense of fair pricing across real estate segments, attracting both developers and investors.

"Leasing activity from both domestic occupiers, as well as Global Capability Centres (GCCs) is likely to end on a strong note in 2024. Residential activity is expected to match 2023 levels, with strong sales across affordable, middle-income and luxury segments," said the report.

Shooting nationals: Riya Shirish beats top field to land first crown in women's 25m pistol

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, DEC 16

Aurangabad teenager Riya Shirish Thatte stunned a top field in the women's 25m pistol final of the 67th National Shooting Championship Competitions (NSCC) at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range (DKSSR) here on Monday, to land her first senior national title. Riya got the better of Punjab's Simranpreet Kaur Brar 7-2 in a shoot-off for gold after both had tied at 31 hits in the eight series of five-shots decider. Olympian and former Asian Games champion Rahi Sarnobat was third with 25 hits.

Simranpreet rounded off a great year by winning the junior women's title on the day to add to the silver



medal at the senior level won previously, this time winning the gold shoot-off 5-2 over Haryana's Payal after both had tied on 34-hits-a-piece. Riya won bronze in this category with 30 hits.

Riya's father Shirish, a former national-level shooter himself and her first coach who is also accompanying the shooter, said, "She had tears in her eyes. There is no range in Aurangabad and

we used to travel 250 km to Pune's Balewadi range where Akshay Ashtaputre, also the mentor of Swapnil Kusale, has been coaching her for the last five years. She wants to shoot and earn laurels for India."

The senior finals field, besides Simranpreet, who was in contention to make the Paris Olympics this year, and Rahi, also had such top former internationals as Heena Sidhu and Annu Raj Singh among others.

Earlier Simranpreet topped both the qualification stages with identical scores of 584.

Riya, while qualifying second in the juniors, managed to make the final, clinching the eighth and last qualifying spot with scores of 576.

WEST BENGAL AND SERVICES WIN BIG IN SANTOSH TROPHY

AGENCIES
HYDERABAD, DEC 16

West Bengal and Services recorded dominant victories in Group A of the final round of the 78th National Football Championship for Santosh Trophy at the Deccan Arena on Monday.

West Bengal maintained their reign at the top of the table after beating hosts Telangana 3-0 for their second consecutive win, while defending champions Services finally got going and opened their account for the season with a 4-0 win over Jammu & Kashmir.

Jammu & Kashmir remained at the bottom with no points from two games. Telangana are currently in fifth with a point from their draw against Rajasthan on the opening day.

The cautious and defensive setup from Telan-



gana could only keep West Bengal at bay until the 39th minute. Robi Hansda took advantage of a botched clearance inside the box and smashed it into the bottom corner for the opening goal. It was Hansda's eighth goal of the Santosh Trophy campaign, which helped him overtake Tamil Nadu's Lijo K and become the top scorer.

Narohari Shrestha joined the scoresheet with a superb glancing header

into the roof of the net at the stroke of half-time. Shrestha continued his fine scoring form and netted his third of the final round and West Bengal's third of the game in the 56th minute. Receiving a through ball from Rabibal Mandi at the edge of the box, Shrestha swiftly turned and side-footed it into the bottom-right corner.

Coming into the game on the back of a defeat to Manipur, Services

were dominant from the get-go and led 2-0 at half-time. Lethaolen Khongsai scored the opener in the 11th minute, nodding in a free-kick from captain Christopher Kamei with a back header towards the far post. Sreyas VG made it two by converting a low cross from Alan Thapa with a textbook finish from six yards out.

Jammu & Kashmir had started to find some rhythm as the game progressed but any hopes of a comeback were dashed when Services scored twice in the 53rd and 54th minutes. Rahul Ramakrishnan got on the end of a long ball from Khongsai and calmly slotted it past goalkeeper Nirdosh Sagotra. Thapa then got his second assist of the game as he set up Thingnam Bidyashagar Singh, who cut to his left and drilled it in.

Mbappe named in Real Madrid squad ahead of Intercontinental Cup final

AGENCIES

MADRID, DEC 16

Kylian Mbappe has been added to Real Madrid's 24-man squad for the Intercontinental Cup. The Frenchman suffered a thigh injury in their UEFA Champions League 3-2 win over Atlanta and was subbed off after scoring the opening goal.

The forward missed Real Madrid's 3-3 draw against Rayo Vallecano on Sunday (IST) and has participated in training sessions on Sunday and Monday and will be travelling with the squad, whether he will be named in the starting XI is still yet to be seen.

"Mbappe isn't anything very serious. He won't be there for the match [against Rayo], he'll travel to Qatar and see if he can play part of the [Intercontinental Cup final] with-



out risk," Ancelotti said on Friday. The reigning European champions Real Madrid will play the final of the Intercontinental Cup against Pachuca on Wednesday, at the Lusail Stadium in Doha, Qatar. The tournament, organised by FIFA, kicked off in September with the clash between Al Ain, winners of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League 2023-2024, and Auckland City FC, winners of the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) Champions League.

Al Ain, who lost in match 2 to Egyptian African Football Confedera-

tion (CAF) Champions League winners Al Ahly, won. In Match 3, CONCACAF Champions Cup winners CF Pachuca beat Conmebol Copa Libertadores winners Botafogo. CF Pachuca beat Al Ahly in a penalty shoot-out in match 4 and will face Real Madrid for the title.

Real Madrid Squad for Intercontinental Cup:
Goalkeepers: Thibaut Courtois, Lunin and Fran Gonzalez.

Defenders: Lucas Vazquez, Vallejo, Fran Garcia, Antonio Rudiger, Youssef, Asencio and Lorenzo.

Midfielders: Bellingham, Eduardo Camavinga, Valverde, Luka Modric, Tchouameni, Arda Guler and Dani Ceballos.

Forwards: Vinicius Jr, Kylian Mbappe, Rodrygo, Endrick, Brahim, Gonzalo and Victor Munoz.

Rajmata Jijabai Trophy: Manipur march into semis with emphatic win over Jharkhand

AGENCIES

NARAINPUR, DEC 16

Defending champions Manipur routed Jharkhand by five second-half goals in Group A to become the first team to reach the semifinals of the 29th Senior Women's National Football Championship for the Rajmata Jijabai Trophy at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Ground on Monday. Manipur delivered a stellar second-half performance to secure a commanding 5-0 victory over Jharkhand after a goalless first half.

Naorem Priyanka Devi struck the first goal in the 50th minute. Laishram Rejiya Devi delivered a pinpoint cross to the top of the box, and Priyanka smashed the ball into the bottom-left corner. In the 70th minute, Priyanka



doubled her tally off a rebounder, calmly slotting it into the bottom-right corner. In the 58th minute, Laishram Rejiya Devi sent in a precise cross from the right. A deflection off Nongmaithem Ratanbala Devi's failed attempt to control the ball, landed perfectly at Dangmei Grace's feet, who wasted no time in smashing the

ball into the roof of the net.

Manipur continued to press, and their fourth goal came in the 84th minute through Asem Roja Devi. Latching onto a through ball at the top of the box, she feigned an early shot, before unleashing a perfectly timed strike.

Grace put the final nail in Jharkhand's coffin in the

86th minute and scored her second goal. A cross from Maibam Nandeshwori Devi down the right wing found Grace in an advantageous position. Spotting the goalkeeper off her line, Grace smartly tapped the ball into the net.

While Manipur made the grade with nine points from three outings with the match against Tamil Nadu still in hand, Odisha and Tamil Nadu played a 1-1 draw in the other match of Group A.

The draw helped Odisha strengthen their position as they have completed their group engagements with seven points after two wins, one defeat, and one draw. While Odisha are placed second in the group behind Manipur, the other team in the fray, Tamil Nadu, have four

points from three matches. Their last match is against Manipur and Tamil Nadu need to win by a margin of four goals to progress in the tournament.

Both teams showcased flashes of brilliance in attack, with well-crafted goals from Sandhiya Ranganathan and Malati Munda. Tamil Nadu goalkeeper Sowmiya Narayanasamy stood out with crucial saves to deny Odisha a potential winner.

Tamil Nadu opened the scoring in the 12th minute, the result of Sandhiya Ranganathan's individual brilliance. Picking up the ball near the edge of the box, Sandhiya skillfully dribbled past two Odisha defenders. She then unleashed a perfectly placed right-footer into the bottom-left corner of the net.

Sr Badminton Nationals all set to begin in Bengaluru from Dec 18

AGENCIES

BENGALURU, DEC 16

An exciting domestic season, which witnessed the emergence of young challengers and revival of fortune for some battle-hardened journeymen, is set for a grand finale with the 77th Inter-Zonal and 86th Senior National Badminton Championships to be played at the Karnataka Badminton Association courts in Bengaluru from December 18-24.

The Championships will kick off with the Inter-Zonal team events with the individual competition beginning from December 20 with defending men's singles champion Chirag Sen and women's singles winner Anmol Kharb look-

ing to retain their respective crowns despite an extremely competitive field.

"The Senior National Championships is the pinnacle of the domestic circuit and considering the enhanced level of competition in our domestic circuit, badminton fans in Bengaluru are set to witness high-quality matches over the next seven days and we are looking forward to a few new stars emerging from among the young guns set to challenge their established peers.

This will be the final BAI tournament of the year, it means our calendar aligns with the BWF calendar," said Badminton Association of India secretary



Sanjay Mishra.

How competitive the senior nationals have been over the years can be gauged from the fact that no men's singles player has been able to retain the title since Chetan Anand

achieved the feat in 2006-07 and Saina Nehwal (2006-07 and 2017-18) is the only women's singles player to win back to back titles during the corresponding period.

Even in the team events,

strong competition was witnessed as defending men's and women's champions, Airport Authority of India and Maharashtra, have failed to qualify for the Inter-Zonal championships this year after being knocked out at the zonal stage.

In the individual competition, Sen will have to overcome a strong challenge from world number 34 Priyanshu Rajawat, world number 37 Kiran George, last edition's finalist M. Tharun and the young brigade led by versatile Pranay Shettigar.

In the women's category, last edition finalist Tanvi Sharma, the experienced Malvika Bansod, Aakarshi Kashyap, Unnati Hooda, former champion

Anupama Upadhyaya and the up-and-coming Rakshitia Sree are likely to pose a formidable challenge to Anmol.

Also looking to defend their titles would be mixed doubles champions Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, and Shruti Mishra and Priya Devi Konjengbam in women's doubles.

This is the third time that Bengaluru is hosting the senior nationals since the turn of the century and the championships will carry a total prize purse of Rs 50 lakh, including Rs 10 lakh for the team championships.

There will be a live draw for both the team championships and the individual events on the eve of the respective events.

Kim Garth reprimanded for breaching ICC Code of Conduct

AGENCIES

DUBAI, DEC 16

Australian player Kim Garth has been reprimanded for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during the third ODI of the ICC Women's Championship series against India in Perth on Wednesday. Garth was found to have breached Article 2.3 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to the "use of an audible obscenity during an International Match."

In addition, one demerit point has been added to Garth's disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period. The incident

occurred in the fourth over of India's innings, when Garth used inappropriate language after being struck for a boundary.

Garth admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by David Gilbert of the Emirates ICC International Panel of Match Referees, so there was no need for a formal hearing. On-field umpires Claire Polosak and Jacqueline Williams, third umpire Eloise Sheridan and fourth umpire Ashlee Gibbons levelled the charge.

Level 1 breaches carry a minimum penalty of an official reprimand, a maximum penalty of 50 percent of a player's match fee, and one or two demerit points.

'Our dream is getting fulfilled': Coach Sumit Bhatia elated to see Kho Kho going global

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, DEC 16

Coach Sumit Bhatia is all pumped up for the first edition of the Kho Kho World Cup scheduled to take place from January 13-19, 2025. Bhatia, who holds a distinct record of being the only head coach to have won the Asian Championship twice, believes that this historical step is an indication of the realisation of the dream to take the sport to the international level and help it

gain global recognition.

Having been honoured with the best coach award by the Delhi government, Bhatia has been a part of various Indian teams' success, including the 2016 and 2023 Asian Kho Kho Championship victories, and has trained players like Nasreen Shaikh and Sarika Sudhakar Kale. Both of them have been Arjuna Awardees.

Nasreen, who is also a part of the World Cup camp, is the only player who has played in two

Asian Championships and won the gold. The coach-student duo is now gearing up for the global event.

Sharing how the journey of Kho Kho World Cup's inception, the coach said, "We organised an international camp here before COVID happened, in 2020. Coaches and players from 16 countries came here and we gave them training. Now they will be coming here for the World Cup but this campaign started in that camp".

He further said, "Around



30-35 countries were willing to play the tournament but we picked the best 20 teams for both men and women. Some countries have single teams while

some have double teams but a total of 24 countries will be participating in the tournament.

It was our dream to take Kho Kho to the international level and now we can see that our dream is getting fulfilled."

He also lauded the launch of the Ultimate Kho Kho League and shared how the franchise-based model has helped the players and coaches gain recognition, while also bringing forward grassroots talent.

"When the Ultimate Kho Kho league started, I also joined Telegu Yodhas as their head coach and we also played the final. Players have gotten exposure through the league and it's not just financial. Earlier we used to hesitate while admitting being a Kho Kho coach but today our players introduce us as their coach," said Bhatia.

He added, "The league got so much coverage that wherever we go, the players are approached for autographs. So the

platform of the league started a new world for both coaches and players and now not just India but the entire world knows us. Earlier we used to tell people about our game but now they know what is Kho Kho and Ultimate Kho Kho league and are also waiting for the third season."

Bhatia also discussed the impact of sports science on Kho Kho and lauded the newly introduced technology and said, "We have benefited

a lot from it. Sometimes we don't understand why a player is not performing well.

But with the introduction of sports science, we now know about the details of the problem.

"For example, a player might be facing issues with his left leg while sitting and so, it gives us an opportunity to work on that weakness... Sports science has helped us in identifying the accuracy and weakness of a player. So it's very beneficial for us."

96 cases approved under Mission Youth schemes at Poonch

J1 NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, DECEMBER 16

A meeting of District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) of Mission Youth Schemes was held today under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal here in the Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex.

The meeting focussed on evaluating cases under Mission Youth Schemes, specifically Mumkin, Tejaswini, and Spurring Entrepreneurship Initiative (SEI).

The Nodal Officer for Mission Youth self-employment schemes presented 130 new cases under Mumkin, 15 cases under Tejaswini and 18 cases under Spurring Entrepreneurship Initiative schemes before the DLIC for approval. The Committee scrutinized all



the files and interviews were conducted as per the standing norms of the Scheme.

A total of 96 cases were approved by the Committee which included 80 cases under the Mumkin scheme, 07 cases under Tejaswini scheme and 09 cases under the Spurring Entrepreneurship Initiative. The DC Poonch

emphasized the importance of timely execution, directing the Deputy Director Employment to expedite the submission of these approved cases to partner banks. This prompt action will ensure that candidates receive the necessary support and financial assistance to establish their entrepreneurial units.

The DC said that the Administration remains committed to empowering young aspirants and building a robust ecosystem of employment and entrepreneurship in the region.

Mission Youth schemes like Mumkin, Tejaswini, and SEI are instrumental in promoting self-employment among the youth in the Border District, providing them with the necessary resources and support to lead independent, sustainable livelihoods.

Among others, the Deputy Director Employment, District Social Welfare Officer, Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO), Lead Bank Manager, District Nodal officer JKEDI, and the General Manager of the District Industries Centre (DIC) participated in the meeting.

Commissioner JMC tours Fish Market Kanji House to assess condition of municipal assets, cleanliness

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, DECEMBER 16

Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC), Dr. Devansh Yadav today conducted a tour of Jammu North to assess the cleanliness and condition of municipal assets.

During the tour, the Commissioner visited various areas, including the Fish Market at Kanji House, Jammu.

At Kanji House, the Commissioner was informed that the Fish Market would be relocated to Narwal Mandi for which shops have already been allotted to the shopkeepers there.

While inspecting the municipal assets at Kanji House, which are currently allocated to the School Education Department and the University of Jammu, the Commissioner



directed the concerned authorities to send formal communication to these departments, requesting for vacating the premises. He said that these assets would be put to the optimal use after repair and renovation.

Responding to the demands of local shopkeepers, the Commissioner assured them that the

shops would be repaired and renovated for their convenience.

Among others, Deputy Commissioner, North JMC, Sanjay Badyal, Chief Revenue Officer, JMC, Sunil Gupta, Health officer, Dr. Vinod Sharma, Executive Engineers, Div-1 and other senior officers of JMC accompanied during the tour.

DC Kulgam reviews preparedness for Good Governance Week-2024

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KULGAM, DECEMBER 16

For smooth and successful conduct of Good Governance Week 2024, which will be observed from December 19 to 24 under the theme 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Aur', the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan today convened a meeting here to review the District's preparedness.

During the meeting, the Officers were briefed about the objectives of the programme, with its focus on grievance redressal, improved service delivery, and the implementation of good governance practices at the grassroots level.

The DC directed officers to organize service delivery and grievance redressal camps across the district.

DDC Shopian reviews progress under ABDP & APDP

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 16

The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar today reviewed the progress of the district under Aspirational Block Development Plans (ABDPs) and Aspirational Panchayat Development Plans (APDPs), at Mini Secretariat Shopian.

During the review, the DDC emphasized the importance of developing panchayats, stating that they are the basic building units of the nation and their development is of utmost priority for the administration.

The District Administration's focus on panchayat development is in line with the government's efforts to strengthen grassroots democracy and promote rural development.

The plans are aimed to



Shahid focused on saturation of all government schemes emphasizing the importance of bringing these areas at par with other developed areas through convergence.

In APDP, around 100 parameters pertaining to line departments are regularly monitored and progress uploaded and reported on the dashboard.

ensure that these development plans are aligned with the needs and aspirations of the local community, especially the more backward pockets and blocks.

The DDC instructed the officials to expedite the implementation of development projects and ensure that the benefits of these projects reach the intended beneficiaries.

Block Ramnagri and Keller are the two blocks in the district which are being targeted for holistic development.

The review meeting was attended by ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone, ACD, CPO, DPO and Block Development Officers (BDOs) besides other concerned officers.

Satish Sharma conducts inspection of I&CC at Samba

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SAMBA, DECEMBER 16

Minister for Transport, Satish Sharma, today conducted a comprehensive review of the Inspection and Certification Centre (I&CC) located in Samba.

During the visit, the Minister reviewed progress on the ongoing infrastructure projects including Inspection and Certification Centre (I&CC) Samba, which will be completed with an estimated cost of Rs 14 crore and shall be fully operational by March-April, 2025.

The Minister exhorted that operationalization of I&CC will play crucial role in streamlined issuance of Fitness Certificates to the vehicles. He stressed upon the executing agencies to complete the remaining work specially construction of ramps at an earliest so that the center can be



made operational before the deadline fixed by the higher authorities.

Satish Sharma undertook a detailed assessment of the left-out works and issued strict directives to the executing agencies to ensure timely completion of all pending projects. He stressed the importance of adhering to project timelines and maintaining high

quality standards in infrastructure development.

The inspection was marked by a thorough examination of the current status and potential bottlenecks in project implementation.

The Minister was accompanied by Transport Commissioner, Vishesh Mahajan, along with other senior officials of the department.

Chairperson DDC B'la reviews developmental scenario in subdivision Uri



J1 NEWS SERVICE
BARAMULLA, DECEMBER 16

The Chairperson, District Development Council (DDC) Baramulla, Safina Beigh today chaired a meeting at Officers Club Uri to review the progress of ongoing projects pertaining to various sectors and schemes in the Subdivision, Uri.

The meeting was attended by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Uri, Javaid Ahmad, Tehsildars, Block Development Officers (BDOs), Assistant Executive Engineers (AEEs), and representatives from the Public

Works Department (PDD), Public Health Engineering (PHE), and Roads and Buildings (R&B), among others. During the meeting, the chairperson conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the progress made in ongoing projects and reviewed the milestones achieved in their execution across the Uri Subdivision.

Speaking during the meeting, the DDC chairperson emphasized the importance of ensuring that all developmental works are completed within the stipulated timelines without compromising quality.

DC inaugurates Chandrabhaga-INDUSCOS event at Lake View Resort Gatha Bheaderwah

J1 NEWS SERVICE
BHEADERWAH, DECEMBER 16

The Office of the Deputy Registrar, INDUSCOS, Jammu, successfully organized the Chandrabhaga-INDUSCOS event at Lake View Resort, Gatha Bheaderwah. The event brought together cooperatives from the Handicrafts and Handloom departments of Ramban, Doda, and Kishtwar Districts to showcase their unique products. The initiative aimed to provide a robust marketing platform to local weavers and artisans while raising awareness about various departmental schemes and employment opportunities related to these crafts.

The event was presided over by Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh, along with Joint Director, Kul Raj Singh, and Deputy Registrar INDUSCOS, Shazia Rehman. Their presence added significance to the occasion as they interacted with artisans, encouraged the participating cooperatives, and emphasized the importance of preserving traditional craftsmanship. A live



craft station, which demonstrated the intricate processes of handloom and handicraft production, garnered significant public attention.

Speaking on the occasion, DC Harvinder Singh appreciated the concerned department for organizing the event to promote local artisans. He highlighted the importance of initiatives like these in boosting local traditions, cultural ethics, and the morale of artisans. He further

emphasized the need to preserve and promote traditional skills for the region's socio-economic growth.

Deputy Registrar Shazia Rehman, while presenting the vote of thanks, acknowledged the efforts of Joint Director Kul Raj Singh in making the event a success. She also expressed gratitude to all dignitaries and participants for their support. To make the event vibrant and engaging, the exhibition remained open

to the public, attracting visitors from all walks of life. The Chandrabhaga-INDUSCOS event not only uplifted artisan morale but also created opportunities for local craftsmen to connect with broader markets.

This collaborative effort demonstrated the department's commitment to empowering artisans, preserving cultural heritage, and strengthening the handicrafts and handloom industries in Jammu and Kashmir.

Kishtwar set to host Autumn Fest, All India Kavi Sammelan-Mushaira

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 16

The District Administration Kishtwar, under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rajesh Kumar Shavan, is set to organize the district's maiden Autumn Festival and All India Kavi Sammelan/Mushaira on December 19-2024.

In this regard, DC addressed a press conference here today, highlighting that the landmark event aims to showcase Kishtwar's rich cultural heritage, promote literary arts and attract tourists to enjoy the abundance of natural beauty of the region.

"This is a proud moment for Kishtwar as renowned artists, including singers like Chaman Lehri, Shoaib Kandoo, and Zahida Tarannum, and dancers like Tavishi Anand, will perform at the event," informed the DC

Another purpose will be to provide the youth and citizens of Kishtwar an opportunity to learn about the Centrally Sponsored Schemes, UT Schemes, Mission Youth



initiatives, Skill Development Programs, and professional courses for youth, he said and added that the District Administration has also taken significant steps towards making Kishtwar a TB Mukht District and promoting massive plantation drives.

"By hosting this unique event, we aim to provide a platform to poets, writers, and artists from across the nation to come together, exchange ideas, and promote these missions while celebrating Kishtwar's scenic beauty and cultural vibrancy" he said.

He further said that the Autumn Festival will feature a wide range of cultural programs, includ-

ing folk music and dance performances, handicraft exhibitions, Free Medical Camps and local cuisine, offering visitors a glimpse into Kishtwar's diverse traditions.

"Complementing this, the All India Kavi Sammelan/Mushaira will bring together renowned poets and literary figures from across the country, such as Shakeel Azmi, Sampat Saral, Varun Anand, Liyakat Jaffery, Prabhat Sharma, and Ramesh Mastana to enlighten the people here" he informed. Local poets will also participate, fostering an enriching exchange of ideas through poetry and storytelling.

The DC emphasized the

importance of such events in fostering cultural unity and boosting tourism. He stated, "This festival will not only promote Kishtwar's identity on a national stage but will also act as a catalyst for economic growth by attracting visitors and supporting local artisans and entrepreneurs."

The event is expected to attract more than 40,000 participants and audiences from all walks of life, transforming Kishtwar into a hub of cultural and literary activity.

Elaborate arrangements have been made by the district administration to ensure the success of the event, with a focus on seamless coordination, security, and hospitality for all attendees, informed the DC Kishtwar.

The Autumn Festival and All India Kavi Sammelan/Mushaira are scheduled to take place at the Historical Chowgan Ground and GDC Auditorium, from 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM and 3:30 PM to 7:30 PM, respectively.

ADC Pawan Kotwal and DIO Dr. Kuldeep Kumar were also present on the occasion.